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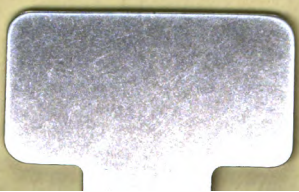
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# **DARK ROSALEEN.**



# DARK ROSALEEN.

BY

MRS. O'SHEA DILLON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

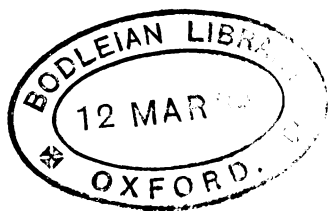
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1884.

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CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,  
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

I INSCRIBE THIS, MY FIRST SERIOUS ATTEMPT AT FICTION,

TO MY DEAR BROTHER,

JOHN AUGUSTUS O'SHEA,

In remembrance of our great affection for one another,

AND IN GRATITUDE FOR HIS AID AND ADVICE,

SO GENEROUSLY GIVEN TO ME WHILE WRITING THIS STORY.

*January, 1884.*



## TO THE READER.

WITH reference to the title of my story—a title meant to be allegorical—I present my readers with the following poem, which, needing no praise of mine, will prove its own excuse for publication and explain my reason for choosing the name of “Dark Rosaleen.”

THE AUTHOR.

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## DARK ROSALEEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE IRISH BY JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN.

[THIS impassioned ballad, entitled in the original “Roisin Duh” (or, “The Black Little Rose”) was written in the reign of Elizabeth by one of the poets of the celebrated Tirconnellian chieftain, Hugh, the Red O'Donnell. It purports to be an allegorical address from Hugh to Ireland, on the subject of his love and struggles for her, and his resolve to raise her again to the glorious position she held as a nation, before the irruption of the Scandinavian spoilers. The true character and meaning of the figurative allusions with which it abounds, and to two only of which

I need refer here, viz.: the "Roman wine" and "Spanish ale" mentioned in the first stanza—the intelligent reader will, of course, find no difficulty in understanding.]

O my Dark Rosaleen,  
Do not sigh, do not weep !  
The priests are on the ocean green,  
They march along the deep.  
There's wine . . . from the royal Pope,  
Upon the ocean green ;  
And Spanish ale shall give you hope,  
My Dark Rosaleen !  
My own Rosaleen !  
Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope,  
Shall give you health, and help, and hope,  
My Dark Rosaleen !

Over hills, and through dales,  
Have I roamed for your sake ;  
All yesterday I sailed with sails  
On river and on lake.  
The Erne . . . at its highest flood,  
I dashed across unseen,  
For there was lightning in my blood,  
My Dark Rosaleen !  
My own Rosaleen !  
Oh ! there was lightning in my blood,  
Red lightning lightened through my blood,  
My Dark Rosaleen !

All day long, in unrest,  
To and fro, do I move,  
The very soul within my breast  
Is wasted for you, love !

The heart . . . in my bosom faints  
 To think of you, my queen,  
 My life, my love, my saint of saints,  
 My Dark Rosaleen !  
 My own Rosaleen !  
 To hear your sweet and sad complaints,  
 My life, my love, my saint of saints,  
 My Dark Rosaleen !

Woe and pain, pain and woe,  
 Are my lot, night and noon,  
 To see your bright face clouded so,  
 Like to the mournful moon.  
 But yet . . . will I rear your throne  
 Again in golden sheen ;  
 'Tis you shall reign, and reign alone,  
 My Dark Rosaleen !  
 My own Rosaleen !  
 'Tis you shall have the golden throne,  
 'Tis you shall reign, and reign alone,  
 My Dark Rosaleen !

Over dews, over sands,  
 Will I fly for your weal ;  
 Your holy delicate white hands  
 Shall girdle me with steel.  
 At home . . . in your emerald bowers,  
 From morning's dawn till e'en,  
 You'll pray for me, my flower of flowers,  
 My Dark Rosaleen !  
 My fond Rosaleen !  
 You'll think of me through daylight's hours,  
 My virgin flower, my flower of flowers,  
 My Dark Rosaleen !

A \*

I could scale the blue air,  
I could plough the high hills,  
Oh, I could kneel all night in prayer  
To heal your many ills !  
And one . . . beamy smile from you  
Would float the light between  
My toils and me, my own, my true,  
My Dark Rosaleen !  
My fond Rosaleen !  
Would give me life and soul anew,  
A second life, a soul anew,  
My Dark Rosaleen !

O ! the Erne shall run red  
With redundance of blood,  
The earth shall rock beneath our tread,  
And flames wrap hill and wood,  
And gun peal, and slogan cry,  
Wake many a glen serene,  
Ere you shall fade, ere you shall die,  
My Dark Rosaleen !  
My own Rosaleen !  
The judgment hour must first be nigh,  
Ere you can fade, ere you can die,  
My Dark Rosaleen !

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# DARK ROSALEEN.

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A Tale of Munster.

## PROLOGUE.

IN the heart of Munster lies the vale of Lusmore, In all Ireland there is not to be found a lovelier or more fertile spot. The atmosphere is so clear and pure that, whilst inhaling its health-giving breezes, you feel, like the gentle Ariel, as if you would fain “drink the air” before you.

Comfortable homesteads are scattered in the midst of rich pasture and meadow lands; meek-faced sheep browse peacefully on the adjoining hills; hedges and banks are thick with yellow furze, and bright with the drooping bells of the purple foxglove.

The close, sombre foliage of the stately trees of Killavalla (otherwise *Killnamealla*, “the

wood of honey") extends far up one side of the steep hill of Kyleneamanna, while looming in the distance lies the Devil's Bit Mountain, conspicuous for the unsightly chasm in its ridge, which gave rise to the grotesque legend to which it owes its characteristic name.

Stalwart peasants are hard at work in the fields in the dip of the valley. Young girls, with fresh faces and full, limpid eyes, pass along with that undulating gait peculiar to the women of the South and West of Ireland. They are carrying the simple mid-day meal to those hungry, sun-burnt mowers. Little, half-naked urchins, with tanned limbs and saucy, animated faces, crowd round cabin doors, and gambol and frolic with all the unrestrained glee of thoughtless childhood.

A group of some dozen houses in the middle of the valley is dignified as the village. From this village winds an avenue-like road of a mile in length, bordered with venerable oaks and elms. At one extremity is a picturesque Gothic church, the walls of which are entirely, and the windows partly, hidden by dark-green creepers. Close by is the glebe-house, embowered quaintly 'mid masses of ivy and clustering rose-bushes. In it dwells the Rev. Adam

Glover, Rector of Lusmore. At the other end of the avenue, in the immediate vicinity of the village, is the Roman Catholic church, a low, straggling building, without any pretensions to style.

A small side-gate opens from the chapel-yard into a lawn, on which is built the chapel-house, the residence of the Rev. John Kennedy. Very unlike the romantic prettiness of the rectory is the bare, uncouth ugliness of the chapel-house. The parish priest has been his own architect, and, though his plans may not have been of the best, certainly the effect is original. Every window is of a different size and form, and they are stuck here and there without the slightest regard to regularity. Then, by some oversight, the staircase had been omitted in the plan, and now inside the porch curves upwards a makeshift of a spiral stairs of open ironwork, so narrow and so perpendicular that the unlucky individual who ascends carelessly is sure to come to grief before reaching the topmost rung.

But, with all this, and in spite of a few minor inconveniences, the chapel-house could boast of many comforts, and no one was ever known to refuse an invitation to partake of the widely-praised hospitality of its owner.

Midway between the rectory and the chapel-house is Castle Neville, the ancestral home of Richard Neville; the lord and master of all this fair valley of Munster. Everyone on his estate, from the well-to-do farmers, with snug stores of money in the bank of the neighbouring market-town, down to the humble cotter who earned his shilling a day, were wont to boast that they had the kindest landlord in the world, and Richard Neville, on the other hand, never failed to speak in the highest terms of his tenantry and dependents.

The inhabitants of the valley consisted of two distinct classes of people: the Palatines, descendants of the English settlers of the Pale; and the pure Irish Celts. The Rector's flock were nearly all Palatines—quiet, steady people, who had inherited the love of fair play, manliness, dogged perseverance, hard-working qualities, and orderly habits of their forefathers.

The Priest's flock, with some exceptions, were undiluted Celts—careless, wild, and effervescent; ready to quarrel at the faintest provocation, and just as ready to make up friends afterwards; quick, but not persevering; witty, impulsive, and as extravagant in their ideas as they were wasteful in their

habits ; full of wild poetry and wilder passion. Still the Celts, in spite of their faults and their weaknesses, were a race bearing within them the germ of infinite possibilities.

And, while the Palatines occasionally were apt to catch the contagion of excitement from their neighbours, the latter were never known to have adopted any of the practical views of their stolid, matter-of-fact brethren.

The bitterness and jealousy arising from religious animosity, at the time our story opens, usually carried to such an extent in Ireland, had no place within the precincts of this valley ; probably owing to the perfect understanding and warm friendship between John Kennedy and Adam Glover. Neither of these men was, nor ever could be, a bigot. John Kennedy's views were too large, too extended ; he looked at all things in a broad, generous sense, and could never cramp himself with a narrow-minded belief, nor cavil at a fellow-creature because his worship might be moulded in a form dissimilar to his own ; and Adam Glover's heart was so full of abounding and unbounded tenderness and pity that, in his desire to do good, he would fain embrace all humanity, without seeking to make any exceptions of creed or class.

The Rector's sole aim was to inculcate that noblest precept of his Divine Master, "Love ye one another," by continuously giving a living example of its working in his everyday life.

John Kennedy had sprung from the people and yet was not of the people. He was an aristocrat; but his was not the aristocracy of birth or position, but of intellect. Wrapped up in his own thoughts he showed himself stern and reserved to his parishioners, as if taking it for granted that he could have nothing in common with them; and they stood apart in awe of their pastor, and dared not encroach within the bounds of familiar intercourse. To a favoured few, however, the proud priest knew how to unbend with a rare charm of manner.

If Adam Glover had succeeded in gaining the affection of all around him, John Kennedy was more feared than liked. The Rector's flock loved their pastor; the Priest's flock were proud of being under the guidance of a man who for twenty years had treated them with an icy indifference, thinking it sufficient condescension on his part to live in the midst of these peasants, without troubling himself with any lively interest in their welfare. Thus, while Adam Glover was the confidant, consoler, and peace-maker, not

alone of his own but also of his *confrère's* parishioners, John Kennedy, when not engaged in the spiritual duties of his parish, kept aloof from his parishioners, and, when not occupied with visitors from the outer world, spent most of his time rambling over his little farm, or musing amidst his books in his pet retreat, a bower library, situated on an acclivity in the centre of his lawn.

Up to the period when our tale commences, some sixteen years ago, this vale of Munster had enjoyed an uninterrupted course of peace and tranquility. Faction-fighting, landlord-murder, ribbonism, evictions, wholesale emigration, and all that class of crime and grievance peculiar to Ireland, had no abiding place here, and when pestilence and famine raged throughout the land, those terrible scourges never approached nearer than the fringe of this favoured spot.



## Part I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### BRIDE INTRODUCES THE CHAPEL-HOUSE.

“JANE, sprinkle some flour on the griddle.”

As I speak I glance with an anxious eye at the round sheet of cast iron, which, resting on a tripod on the hearth, is being heated for my baking. The half-burnt sods of turf glow with a soft redness as our clumsy servant stoops and blows the white ashes away.

“Miss Bride, the flour browns, id’s jist the right hate.”

Then I spread out my dough, and cut it into neat, triangular pieces, which Jane puts carefully, one by one, on the griddle to bake.

The dear old Rector has come to tea, and I must give him a treat. He is so fond of my cream-cakes.

“Miss Bride, iv ye go change yer frock, I’ll attind to the cakes.”

“Well, Jane, I depend on you not to let them burn. Have the tray ready by the time I come down. I will get out the china myself.”

I mount the spiral staircase. How stupid I am, I knock my head against one of the rungs. I enter my room, and go straight to one of the windows. What lovely summer weather! How freshly green the fields are, and how beautiful the wood of Killavalla looks in the distance! To-morrow we are to have the hay cut on the hill-meadow. It is sure to be fine. I must send out lots of buttermilk to the mowers. I am glad I baked so many cakes of white and brown soda bread yesterday, the men will be so hungry. I wonder if Emily Neville means to pay a visit to Castle Neville this season? How happy and light I feel! Happy! whilst he——

Dear Uncle John, is there anyone in the whole world like him? Anyone half so clever, half so noble-minded? How good he has been to me! I have lived with him ever since I was a tiny child, for both father and mother died when I was an infant; but then I have never missed them, for Uncle John has been a father and mother, and everything to me.

Now, I must hurry and dress, lest my cakes get spoiled under Jane's care.

What shall I put on ? I open the cumbrous old oaken wardrobe, and look in doubtfully. How sweet the lavender smells ! There is that Madras muslin, with its delicate brown flowers on a pale cream ground, which Emily Neville sent me as a present from London, and which I made up myself, thinking it too dainty to be entrusted to the mercies of our village sempstress. Ought I wear it now, or will it appear too dressy ? But then it is so becoming, and Uncle John likes it so much.

Uncle John, indeed ! Oh, what a hypocrite you are, Bride Killeen ! Is it to please Uncle John's eyes alone that you decide to put on your Madras muslin ?

I bathe my face and hands, and then, donning my dressing-jacket, I loosen the plaits of my long black hair, and stand contemplating myself in the looking-glass. When I was a little child, my old nurse told me that as soon as a woman discovered her vocation in life the whites of her eyes became yellow.

Every morning since I am in expectation that the backgrounds of my eyes may change their hue ; but I may look and look for ever, they only

seem to grow bluer and bluer every day. I have often heard the peasants say that I resemble my mother, and my mother was the finest woman in Lusmore. How Uncle John would smile if he came behind me just now and saw me admiring myself! Wouldn't he be surprised? What a change three months have made in me!

I wonder if Emily Neville will think the Rector's nephew handsome, and I wonder what he will think of her? Emily is so pretty, so very pretty, and has such charming ways. Once I was so taken with those same ways that I tried to imitate them; but I'll never forget Uncle John's look as he asked me if I had recently read the fable of the donkey who aped the antics of his master's pet dog. Oh, it was too cruel of Uncle John, and before the Rector, too! Pained and humiliated, I crept upstairs, and fairly cried myself sick, my pride was so wounded.

But uncle was right, as he always is; better shine by my own farthing rushlight than borrow from anyone else's sun. I am Bride, and Emily is *Emily*. I wonder if she will bewitch the Rector's nephew, as she does everyone else?

I hope to mercy Jane won't let those cakes burn. Smoothing out the ribbons of my Madras muslin, I descend the staircase, our big black cat

following in my wake, evidently appreciating my unusual finery. As I enter the kitchen, Jane stares at me, and throws up her hands in amazement.

"Sure, Miss Bride," she says, "but ye're mighty fine entirely, entirely. One would think to see yer grand frock that ye wor at laist expectin' a sweetheart. But there's no one come yet but the Rector's nevvvy, and the Priest's niece wud never take up wid a Prodestan gintleman."

I flush, partly with indignation, for, though Jane is a trusted servant, I do not allow her to take liberties. How those common people *do* dive into the heart of things!

My cakes are beautifully baked, so crisp and light. They have a deliciously appetising odour. Won't the dear old Rector enjoy them?

"Quick, Jane, get me some fresh butter from the dairy."

I make the tea and get out our best china, a set of real Sèvres which one of Uncle John's foreign friends brought us last Christmas from France. How dainty the cups look! Somehow they put me in mind of Emily Neville. Could those maidens in delicate pink panniers and high-heeled shoes ever have had feelings like

my feelings, or were they ever real live flesh and blood girls at all?

"There, there, Jane, don't make such a noise. They will hear you in the parlour."

"Lord bless us! Miss Bride," she cries, as she comes in panting with one hand to her left side, and the butter dish extended in the other, "I was that frightened. That ould black cat is the divil. Id's just called out 'Jane,' quite plain from the top av the stairs."

"Oh, go away, you stupid thing, you!" I cry impatiently. "Give me the butter, and I want you to carry in the tray."

Presently, Jane goes before me with the tray, and I follow, with a dish of hot cream-cakes, through the narrow passage with its corkscrew stairs; and I have to keep a close watch on our superstitious handmaid, for her looks are turned askance up the winding flight, where her pet aversion, our black cat, sits grinning at her with its green, demon-like eyes.

"Jane, take care. If you let the china fall, Father John will never forgive us: neither you for dropping it, nor me for taking it out of its resting place."

"I'm sure, Miss Bride, that same cat is not right. Thim black cats are so awfully 'cute.

They say, miss, that the sperrits av ould wicked hags, whin they die, go into the bodies av black cats, an' they are tin times wickeder as bastes than whin they wor human bein's."

"You foolish woman," I exclaim, as I notice the tray tilt a little to one side with its precious freight. "See what you are about."

Going in front of her, I mount a couple of steps and with my disengaged hand open a door, and we enter the only sitting-room of the chapel-house. Such a quaint, strange room. It is the sole apartment worthy of the name in the whole house. One large window, opening on the lawn, gives a view of the wood of Killavalla and the hills beyond. The aspect is west, and, as we have glorious sunsets in our valley, it is pleasant to sit here of an evening and lazily watch the banks of rosy-golden clouds, as they slowly sink beyond the horizon. The half-moon window high up on the opposite wall looks on a deserted road; but we have obscured its light by a thick curtain, since we found out how some inquisitive folk used to bring a ladder and peep on us at our festivities. Within, the room is crowded with odds and ends of the most extraordinary furniture. There are skins and rugs in abundance, on the backs of chairs and on the floor, and

numerous medallions and pictures are hung every way and any way, without the slightest adherence to fixed rule. Over the piano, in the corner, is "Jane's Saint," as we call it. This is an Old Master—a Spanish boy laughing, as he devours a plate of cabbage with infinite gusto. One morning, Uncle John, coming down early, caught Jane at her prayers before this picture; her excuse being, that he was such a pleasant-looking saint, he would be sure to put in a good word for her, if she only asked him often enough. Along the end of the room farthest from the door, and at the same side as the wine cupboard, extends a long narrow table covered with a heterogeneous mass of things. Here is my wicker basket of variegated wools, with the bronze cast of uncle's favourite horse, our noble and spirited Alphard, close by; here is my dear dead mother's old-fashioned writing-desk, and scattered about in the most picturesque disorder are numerous valuable little curiosities brought and sent to us from various parts of the world by our kind friends. And as for books? Oh, dear me! what an amount of useless trouble uncle *does* give me with his careless ways! To-morrow I must take every one of those books and put them all back in their proper places in the bower library.



There is that little statuette of a girl gleaner which that delightful Norwegian poet-sculptor gave to uncle last year. I am sure that no peasant woman could ever have such a refined expression, but how could a poet help investing his work with something of his own charming spirituality? What bright, genial ways he had, and how he did admire uncle's head and face! When I once said to him how I thought the Rector would make a much handsomer bust than Uncle John, he laughed and answered that Adam Glover was an angel and not a man, but while there might be a few Adam Glovers here and there throughout the world, there never could be but *one* John Kennedy. I suppose there must be thousands of handsomer sitting-rooms than ours, but then what happy days we have spent here, how many comely women's faces have I not seen within these four walls, and what clever men drop in on us occasionally from the outer world, to keep us from rusting, as Uncle John says! Dear Uncle John! surely there cannot be in the whole universe anyone to equal him.

Uncle is in his usual seat, a high-backed oak chair, always placed for him at the same spot beside the centre table facing the front window,

with the fireplace to his left and the piano behind. The Rector is opposite him, and Gerald stands in the embrasure of the window.

“How long you have been away from us, Miss Killeen!” says Gerald Moore, the Rector’s nephew, in a low tone, as he approaches me.

I smile, as, placing the dish of cakes on the centre table, I sit down in front of the tray and begin to pour out the tea, while Jane arranges the plates and knives.

“What, our very best china!” exclaimed Uncle John, with a merry twinkle in his eye. “See, Adam,” he adds, turning to the Rector, “how favoured you are.”

Then he looks slyly at my Madras muslin with its gay ribbons, and the colour mounts to my forehead. How hateful it is to blush, and how awkward it makes one feel!

Suddenly uncle sighs a little weary sigh, and such a stern, pained expression passes over his face as his eyes meet mine in a significant way, and I know what he is thinking of, and he knows what I am thinking of.

Alas! our sad secret will obtrude its ugly shadow now and then across our brightest hours—our sad secret, known only to Uncle John, to Peter O’Brady, to Sally Breen, and to myself,

and which we manage to keep sedulously hidden from all the world beside. God help Uncle John, and God help us !

“ Little girl,” says Uncle John, with a bright smile, as the gloomy cloud lifts from his brow, “ little girl, like Figaro, ‘ let us make haste to laugh lest we may be tempted to weep.’ ”

The Rector raises his head in surprise on hearing these words ; he has been so busy with the cakes that he has not noticed our by-play. Dear old man, how like a picture he is, with his luxuriant white hair, his mild brown eyes, and his unwrinkled face ! How particular he is about dress, too ! He is always so scrupulously neat. I remember last summer, when we had that American girl staying with us, one day we went down to the village together and met the Rector, and she was so taken with his appearance that she said to me afterwards that he was a clean old man, and she rather guessed when she went back to New York she would make her young man wear knee-breeches, and shoes with silver buckles, and black silk stockings. A clean old man ! I suppose she meant it as a compliment.

Do all my best, I can't keep Uncle John even passably tidy. He will insist on wearing that old brown soutane which clings so to his tall, gaunt

form, and there is that shabby priest's cap, which he scarcely ever has off his head indoors or out.

"Bride, your cakes are delicious," says the Rector, as he hands me his cup to be replenished a second time.

"I am glad you like them," I answer, delighted to have pleased him.

"Adam, do you know if Emily Neville is coming to the castle this season?" asks Uncle John.

"She is here already," the Rector replies; "I met her this morning out riding near Baltore."

A curious little pang goes through me on hearing this. How foolish I am! Am I sorry that Emily has come after all? Gerald Moore's full brown eyes are watching me, and, feeling embarrassed with their gaze, I address him:

"Mr. Moore, have you seen Miss Neville?"

"No," the young man responds. "Is she a great friend of yours?"

"Yes," I reply, "a very dear friend of all of us."

Then as I think of her fascinating ways my heart sinks within me, but, conquering this mean jealousy, I continue bravely:

"She is so lovely, so charming, you will be

sure to admire her as—as everyone does who meets her.”

Gerald smiles. He has splendid teeth, and there is a world of expression in his dark face. The young men of our valley are accounted the most splendid men in Munster: they are all big, broad-shouldered fellows, and most of them are ruddy or fair-complexioned, with quite an English type of feature, and then they are joyously good-humoured, and full of fun. The Rector's nephew is so different, he seems so much in earnest in everything he says or does. I can fancy our young men rollicking at fairs or faction-fights; but I can well imagine Gerald Moore heading a forlorn hope, his dark Celtic face all aglow with the fire of enthusiasm as he dashes on to victory or death.

“I am sure to like anyone who is a friend of yours,” he says, after a moment's pause. My left hand is near him, and he touches it lightly with his own as if to emphasise his words. I start and blush at the slight pressure, and then turn consciously to my right where Uncle John and the Rector are; but they are not taking any notice of us. The Rector is amusing himself by cutting a portion of cake into small dice, and Uncle John is playing carelessly with his teaspoon

and flicking his tea over the nice cloth. Presently he speaks :

"Bride, we must get Emily Neville over to our haymaking to-morrow. You will drop in on us also, Adam, will you not?"

"Oh, do, *do* come!" I cry. The Rector laughs at my vehemence.

"I am afraid," he replies, "I can't spare time to-morrow. I have to attend to my schools."

"Nonsense, Adam, you must come," Uncle John breaks in. "Leave the schools to the scholars for once. You make a slave of yourself to those peasants." There is infinite scorn in uncle's tone as he utters these words, and Adam Glover gives him a look of quiet reproof.

"John, John, how little you care for your flock, and what power you could have over them if you choose!"

"Power," uncle repeats sarcastically, "power to make them drink less whisky on fair days in the town of Knockbeg. Come, old friend," he adds, with one of his rare smiles, and laying his hand on the Rector's shoulder, "on this point let us agree to differ. Besides, what do you wish me to do? Where could you meet with a more law-abiding, prosaic set than our parishioners?"

"Yes, they are very good," remarks the Rector gently; "but then, will it last for ever?"

"If it lasts for our time," said uncle grimly, "we ought to be satisfied."

"Ah, John!" says the Rector sadly, shaking his head, "you are too prone to let things slide. History may repeat itself even in our obscure valley, and who knows what dire effects in the future may spring from the neglect of the present?"

"Enough, Adam, enough!" cries Uncle John impatiently, as his stern brow contracts. Not even from Adam Glover could he brook any more interference. I wish uncle wouldn't sneer so about "peasants." It sounds hard and cruel; and how are listeners to guess that, beneath it all, his heart is tender and noble? I know there are people in the town of Knockbeg and its neighbourhood who hate him because of his haughty way of keeping them at a distance; but if they really knew him as I do, they must love him a thousandfold more than they hate him now. I think only Peter O'Brady and Sally Breen and myself thoroughly understand Uncle John. The Rector pushes his tea-cup from before him and sighs. Then we relapse into

silence for some moments, and watch the soft clouds in the distance. The beauty of the evening stirs me to the depths of my being, and I am happy, oh ! so happy. Presently I hear the crunching of steps on the gravel outside, and a voice calls out in a sort of hissing whisper :

“ Kennedy ! Kennedy ! ”

Then a small, slight man, with dark face and Italian features, pushes his head and shoulders through the opening of the window and looks in ; but as soon as he catches sight of our guests he draws back with a sudden “ Ah ! ”

Uncle John gets up from his chair with a look of surprise and approaches the window.

“ Why, Clarke, is it you ? ” he exclaims. “ Come in ; there is nobody here but friends.”

The small, dark man shakes his head repeatedly, and makes a pantomimic gesture with his thumb over his shoulder, and hisses out again in the same whisper :

“ I am not alone.”

Uncle John shrugs his shoulders with a resigned air, and commences a conversation in a low tone with the new-comer. We strive not to listen, but it is impossible not to hear occasionally, for Uncle John raises his voice frequently in expostulation, in spite of the



visible effort of the other to confine the conversation to whispers.

“The British Government!” says Uncle John, “the British Government has enough to do at this moment without hunting after him. Nonsense; I never met anyone with the organ of caution developed to such a ridiculous extent as——”

“Hush, hush!” interrupts the other, as he directs a warning glance towards us.

Then the whispering is resumed. Presently uncle raises his voice again.

“Why, as he chooses to go masquerading, I can’t prevent him. I need not tell you, Clarke, that any time he passes he will be welcome to stop here as long as he likes. You are not off, are you? You must be hungry after coming such a distance. Wait, and my niece will get you something to eat.”

The small, Italian-faced man again shakes his head negatively, and, pointing his thumb with the same pantomimic gesture over his shoulder, disappears. I have never seen him before. Who can he be?

## CHAPTER II.

PETER O'BRADY.

UNCLE JOHN remained several minutes at the window after the departure of his shy, strange visitor. At last, rousing himself with a visible effort, he resumed his seat at the table.

"Bride," said he, "give me another cup of tea."

"But, uncle," I expostulate, in a tone of dismay, "the tea is quite cold now. You cannot drink it."

"Never mind, dear. Give it to me; I am thirsty."

Shaking my head as if not altogether satisfied, I fill his cup and pass it back to him. As I do so, I notice the Rector watching uncle with an air of curiosity.

"John, who is your friend? Have I seen him before?"

“No, Adam, you have not seen him before.” Then he continued, after a pause: “He and I were staunch comrades once; but that was in the days of my rash youth, before you and I had met. I am sorry he would not come in. You would like him much. An enthusiast, but honest—honest—honest.” Here, as if wishing to waive further conversation on the subject, uncle addressed himself to Gerald: “Gerald, are you not growing tired of our dull valley?”

I start at this question. Why should Gerald grow tired so soon? He has been only here three months, and the West of Ireland, where he has spent all the rest of his life, must be at least as monotonous as this place.

“The desire nearest to my heart,” said the Rector, with a glance of affection towards his nephew, “is that Gerald might be induced to join the ministry and devote himself to the service of the Church. But I am afraid,” he added, “his inclinations do not——”

“Nonsense, Adam,” interrupted Uncle John, with a short laugh, “the boy is more cut out for a soldier.”

Gerald, who made a face when the Rector spoke, now smiled approvingly at Uncle John’s words.

"John, John, are we not soldiers also?" said the Rector, as his countenance glowed with a soft enthusiasm. "Have we not daily to struggle with wayward hearts and battle against evil influences?"

Dear old man! how graciously dignified he looks, as he speaks; and I am not alone in being impressed by his manner and appearance, for Uncle John's stern countenance relaxes into its rare, beautiful smile, as stretching out his hand he grasps that of the Rector, and says:

"Dear friend, you are indeed a soldier, and a noble and good one, too; but you can't expect all of us to be endowed with the same amount of zealous activity that you are."

Adam Glover shrinks at uncle's words, the Rector is so painfully sensitive to the least praise. For the last few moments I am conscious that Gerald is making dumb signals to me, but I don't pretend to see. At length he summons up courage and addresses me:

"Miss Killeen, do come for a walk across the fields. The air is so fresh outside. This room is stifling."

I shake my head. I long to go out; but I dare not leave my precious china to be put away by Jane's awkward hands.

"I am afraid," I reply, looking shyly at Gerald, "I am afraid that I must refuse to go out with you this afternoon, I have so much to attend to in the house, and our servant is not to be depended upon."

What an ordeal it is to try to calmly meet another person's gaze! Somebody has said that one must be of a false nature to turn away from anyone's regard; but I am sure I am not in the least false, and yet I cannot look straight at Gerald Moore. I wonder if Emily Neville will feel alike towards him? She is sure to say something dreadful. She will find out his weak points and play on them for her own amusement. Oh! Bride Killeen, Bride Killeen, what a small-souled, jealous creature you are, and how disloyal to your friend! How do you know what Emily will really do and say?

"Why not go for a walk, Bride?" says uncle; "besides, you might take a message for me to the post-office to Kate Mahon. Tell her the head-inspector will be here early next week, and that her son must have his school and scholars in proper trim."

"But, uncle," I remonstrate, "I really can't go just yet."

Gerald frowns. If he is vexed I can't help it.

He is quick-tempered, and ready to fly out at the least trifle.

"John," said the Rector, "I hear the noise of approaching wheels. I am certain you are going to have some more visitors."

"It sounds to me like Sally Breen's' war-whoop," answers Uncle John. "Someone is tearing up the avenue at a racing pace. See who it is, Bride."

I rush to the window, almost dragging the tray with me in my eagerness, and paying not the slightest heed to my poor flounce, which catches in Gerald's chair. He extricates my dress carefully, and then follows in my wake.

Presently, a bony, long-necked horse, with evidently more spirit than flesh, comes pressing along, dragging after it a rickety jaunting-car. Sally Breen drives this horse and vehicle, and every now and then she gives an exultant yell as if to herald her approaching arrival. She looks such a comical figure, bareheaded, with her unkempt mop of short hair, her red face, all in a bath of perspiration with the exercise, her brawny, muscular arms naked to the shoulders, and her full flannel skirt blowing about her, revealing her Angolan stockings and hob-nailed

shoes. The off-side of the car is occupied by Peter O'Brady, who seems to enjoy the fun of being driven by such a female Jehu.

"Hurroo!" shouts Sally, with a flourish of the whip over her head, as they dash past the window up to the porch in madcap canter.

"Oh, uncle!" I cry, "here is Peter O'Brady."

Peter O'Brady is always a welcome guest, bidden or not. He is a character in the countryside; is to the front at all gatherings of the people, be they fairs, races, or political demonstrations; knows and is known by gentle and simple, and, I verily believe, could address every man, woman, and child in the county by Christian and surname. Yet withal Peter is proud, very proud—proud of his popularity; proud of his desposal of the proprieties; proud of his pedigree, for are not the O'Bradys descendants of "the love-making man"?—his name coming from *bradach*, which has that persuasive sense in Irish; proud of his eloquence—he is not a cultured scholar, but he has great natural gifts, and Uncle John holds that he is unequalled as a mob-orator; and proud of the vague tradition that he was one of Smith O'Brien's lieutenants in the mighty revolution of 1848. Besides, is he not editor of our local

paper, a storehouse of interesting gossip, and a very mine of eccentric originality ?

I fly out to the front door to welcome the newcomers. Peter O'Brady has just jumped off the car, looking more dishevelled than usual from the effects of Sally's furious driving. His bottle-green coat is covered with dust, and his emerald-green satin tie hangs loosely about his neck. The hat planted firmly on the back of his head seems scarcely large enough to cover the curly masses of his crisp brown hair, and rapid motion has served to heighten the restless sparkle and hilarious mischief in his eyes.

"Oh, Peter," I exclaim with both hands extended to him, "I'm delighted you've come."

He screws his gold-rimmed eye-glass into his right eye, and scanning me quizzically from head to foot, he says, in feigned admiration :

"Why, Bride, you are a regular butterfly. Who are the fine feathers for ?"

"Don't tease," I say coaxingly. "Besides, butterflies have wings and not feathers. The Rector and his nephew are here. I must brush you up and arrange your tie properly before I let you be seen in the parlour."

"Bride," says Peter O'Brady resignedly, as he drops his eye-glass, "do what you will with me.



Sure, I was always the slave of every one of your sex."

Sally Breen is standing at the horse's head, patting him and talking to him to keep him quiet; but the animal is restless and paws the ground, and neighs and looks at the woman as if he fain would speak his wants.

"Miss Bride," says Sally, "if this isn't the knowinest baste in the world. Jist look at him now, if he ain't tryin' to ax me for a feed. He does nothin' but atin' from mornin' till night, an' sorra a bit o' flesh he ever puts upon his blessed bones."

Our stable boy, who has been lazily leaning over the small gate which divides our lawn from the plot of ground round the chapel, now attracts Sally's attention, and she calls to him in shrill tones :

"Come here, ye grinnin' *omadhaun*, an' give the poor baste a feed, an' rub him down."

"Sally," I say, "Tom will take care of the horse, and if you go into the kitchen Jane will give you a cup of tea and some hot cake."

Jane, who had been standing within the porch, with arms akimbo, now sniffs the air contemptuously at my words.

"Me, Miss Bride!" cried Jane indignantly,

"me wait on Sall-o'-the-Wig! Sure, an' miss, ye wouldn't demane a dacent servant be axin' her to attind on a crathur like that?"

"Crathur, yerself!" screams Sally, her face crimson with rage. "Crathur, indeed! An' if your betthers call me Sall-o'-the-Wig, on account o' my fine head o' hair, there's no rayson why the likes of you must be so familiar. Me name is Sarah, do ye hear? Crathur! Yah, ye ugly ould woman, call me that agin; *do*, and I'll double ye in two, an' make a dodge-ball av ye!"

As she finishes these words Sally gives a yell, and making a dart in the direction of Jane, shakes her closed fist in the woman's face. Jane, frightened, gets behind Peter O'Brady.

"Misther Pether, protect me, will ye, if ye plase, sir?" says Jane, trembling, quite cowed by Sally's threat of making her into a dodge-ball.

Peter O'Brady, who has been busy handing me some newspapers and a brown paper parcel out of the well of the jaunting-car, now interposes as peacemaker.

"Sarah, my princess, gently, gently. Your language is so strong it may crack your voice, and then who would sing at our country weddings? Be merciful, Sarah, my princess, and

spare your precious lungs to us a little longer. As for you, Jane, I am not surprised at your being rather upset by Sarah's abrupt sayings; but Sarah means nothing—really nothing. It is all animal spirits—animal spirits. Here, Jane, hold this parcel a moment. What between the black cat and other things”—here he winked significantly at me—“you must have a great deal to contend with.”

Peter is the archest of flatterers. The two women are mollified immediately. Jane takes the paper parcel gingerly in her fingers, but looks askance at the same time at Sally, as if dreading that the wrath of the latter is not yet quite appeased, and that she may still be tempted to carry out her terrible threat of the dodge-ball. But Sally is in an angelic humour and simpers complacently; it isn't every day she is called a princess.

We enter the house, leaving the bony horse to our stable-boy, Tommy's, care. Sally comes last, but not without throwing a parting shot after her.

“Stop yer grinnin', Tommy, ye *omadhaun*, an' mind ye're up to none o' yer thricks wid that horse, or he'll snap your carrotty head off, as soon as ye'd bite a platee.”

Tommy's capacious mouth widens into a broader grin until he shows the full armoury of his sound, white teeth; but the horse, unexpectedly making a playful plunge forward, pulls the boy almost off his feet, and the effort to recover his balance sobers him, and makes him attend more carefully to his business.

In the space of a few minutes, Jane and I manage to make Peter O'Brady presentable. Jane brushes vigorously till there is no longer a speck on his clothes, and I arrange his green satin tie in a graceful knot, fastening it with a bog-oak pin in the shape of a harp—uncrowned, of course—set with Kerry diamonds. The corners of his stand-up collar stick out assertively beneath his ears, and his bottle-green coat is flung carelessly open to expose to full view his new tabinet waistcoat. I make him pirouette three times in the middle of the kitchen floor to see if any alteration is necessary.

"Will I do, girls?" he says, as planting his right hand on his hip, his left foot advanced well in front, and his left hand gracefully elevated, he strikes an oratorical attitude to our intense admiration. "Will I do?"

Sally Breen inspects him critically, for a moment, before she ventures to speak.

"Ye'd be beyant bettherin', Misther Pether, if ye had a flower in yer buttonhole."

"Oh, Sally!" I cry, "that's just the thing. Run into the garden and bring a flower. Now, mind, it must be white with green leaves."

I know Sally has a weakness for loud colours, if left to herself. In a few moments she returns with a white rose. Evidently she has determined to make up in size for the restriction in hue. She has brought the biggest rose she could get.

"Flowers to the flowery," sighs Peter, in a sentimental tone, as I pin the rose in his coat.

"Come," I say, laughingly. "They will think in the parlour that we are plotting some conspiracy if I keep you here much longer."

As I speak, the sitting-room bell rings sharply.

"There—there," I continue; "Uncle John is impatient. Come on, Peter, come."

Peter O'Brady hesitates and hangs back, to my surprise.

"What is the matter?" I exclaim, as I see he has no intention of stirring.

"Well, Bride, my dear," he answers, with a droll ruefulness, "you've decked me out so that I feel like a peacock, and I'm afraid when I walk

into the parlour, instead of speaking as a mere wingless mortal, I shall cry out, 'cock-a-doodle-do.'"

"Sure, then, Mither Pether," says Sally, "who ever heard of a crowin' paycock?"

Again the bell rings sharply, and putting my arm within that of Peter O'Brady I draw him into the passage. When we reach the bottom of the two steps leading to the parlour, he stops, and, facing me, speaks :

"Bride, is—is everything all right?"

"Hush, hush!" I reply, in an alarmed whisper, "not so loud—he may hear you. Yes, everything is all right."

Then, taking both my hands in his, he says, in a subdued voice :

"Thank God for that, my dear. If you only knew the trouble I have to keep our secret from the gossips round about Knockbeg. They suspect there is something, but have not the slightest idea what it is, and the artful way I have to evade their questions is a caution, I tell you."

"Oh ! Peter, I would die a thousand deaths, sooner than one of them should know."

Dismayed and bewildered, I lean my back against the wall, and look up at Peter O'Brady

in a helpless, beseeching manner. I am horror-struck at the thought that possibly, in an unguarded moment, he may betray our secret.

"Trust me, Bride," says Peter cheeringly, "I'd give every drop of my heart's blood to save Father John from pain, and I've only to hold my tongue, and all will be safe."

The parlour door is flung open with a bang, and Uncle John looks down on us.

"Why, you are a nice pair of conspirators," he says. "Come in, Peter, and give an account of yourself."

Peter follows Uncle John. I close the door behind them, and steal softly into the porch, anxious to compose my countenance lest its sad expression might cause uncle to suspect the subject of our conversation.

My poor geraniums, how dry and drooping they are! I am afraid they have been neglected of late. I take my small watering-can and give them a drink. Then I pick off their decayed blossoms, and rearrange the plants so as to display to the best advantage their wealth of colour. The glass sides of the porch look dim. I must get Tom to clean the panes to-morrow if he has any spare time, for my plants want more sunshine. Deliciously free and fragrant the air

comes in from outside, and the sound of voices and laughter is borne plainly on the breeze from the open window of the sitting-room. I am glad Peter O'Brady has come ; he is always such an enlivenment to Uncle John.

"Miss Killeen ! Miss Killeen, where are you ?"

I know it is Gerald Moore' who seeks me, and, in a wanton mood, I hide myself in the farthest corner of the porch. But he soon finds me out. How stiff and distant he is ! I wonder have I offended him in any way ?

"Miss Killeen, your uncle sent me to ask you for the paper parcel which Mr. O'Brady brought with him."

"It is in the kitchen," I answer. "Come with me ; I will give it to you."

Gerald's face is very grave. Perhaps he is cross with me for not remaining in the parlour ; but then when I am there he does not speak to me ; he is always mute in the presence of Uncle John. I feel choked myself, penned in within walls. How delightful it must be this evening up yonder on the crest of Kyleneamanna ! We have been so busy lately that I have not been able to stroll to my favourite retreat, nor to revel in its airy independence. Were I a poet I



would always think out my poems on a mountain top.

“Dreaming, Bride, dreaming !”

It is Gerald’s voice, and for the first time he calls me Bride. I blush, and my heart beats fast, and I fain would rush away.

“Dreaming,” I say lightly to hide my confusion—“dreaming. No. I am like Martha—too intent on domestic matters to have leisure for dreaming. Come, let us get the parcel.”

He draws back coldly at my words. It is so easy to chill him. He does not understand women’s ways. We go into the kitchen. To my surprise, Jane and Sally, lately so antagonistic, are now seated close together, talking very confidentially. An old pack of cards is spread out on our servant’s lap, and Sally is pointing to one of them and saying :

“The knave of spades means villany an’ a dark man. Jane, don’t be afther listenin’ to a dark man, or he’ll desave ye.”

“Jane,” I say in an angry tone, “give me Mr. O’Brady’s parcel. Sally, I am ashamed of you encouraging such nonsense.”

Startled by my voice, Jane jumps up hastily, all the cards come tumbling to the ground, and the three-legged stool on which she has been

seated falls over with a clatter. Sally, chuckling audibly, rises at her ease, eyeing me with an air of half-pert defiance. She has been amusing herself by playing on the superstitions of our foolish servant. I wish she wouldn't do so : I don't like it. Jane hands me the paper parcel from off the dresser, and whispers confidentially :

"Miss Bride, thim cards tell the raal truth. Sally said I'm to cross the wather soon, an' what can that mane?"

"Get away, you silly woman," I say. "Of course you'll cross the water the next time you go over the bridge on the road to Knockbeg."

Gerald Moore and I return together to the parlour. Peter O'Brady, enthroned in a low chair near the window, with his legs crossed, is telling some story or other. The Rector looks uneasy, but Uncle John seems highly amused.

"Wait a minute, Peter. Bride, give me the parcel."

I do as uncle bids me, and he untwists the twine.

"Oh, I forgot. I've a letter somewhere for you, sir," says Peter O'Brady, standing up and fumbling in his various pockets.

"Never mind, Peter, that will do by-and-by. I want to hear about Mickey Dwyer."

Whilst I am not noticing, Uncle John has passed the twine round my waist, and fastened me to his chair.

"Oh, uncle!" I exclaim imploringly, "do please let me go."

"Be quiet, little grandmother," he says, "you can't run away in a hurry again. You are too fond of the kitchen. Peter O'Brady's tastes and yours are inclined to be rather low."

"Oh, uncle!" I cry in an offended tone, "how can you say such a thing?" Then I struggle to free myself from my bonds, but in vain.

Peter O'Brady screws his eye-glass in his eye and watches me with the air of a connoisseur, as if I were a poor fish wriggling on a hook. Gerald Moore brings me over a chair, and, as I sit down, resigned to my fate, I smile gratefully up at him, and his face brightens.

"It won't be for long," he whispers, as he draws his chair close to mine.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Moore; you are so kind," I demurely answer. Then I sigh ruefully at the sight of the untidy tea-table and my precious china; but Peter O'Brady is enjoy

ing my confusion, so I cast a wrathful glance towards him, and affect not to care at being a prisoner.

"Well, Peter," says Uncle John impatiently, "how about Mickey Dwyer?"

Peter O'Brady uncrosses his legs, pushes his hand carelessly through his brown curls, and then again, screwing his eye-glass in his eye, looks at each one of us before he speaks.

"Go on, Peter," cries uncle impatiently.

"Well, sir, Mickey Dwyer called one day at *The Avenger* office, and he was in a towering rage with his landlord, who had given him notice to quit. Mickey had written out about seven or eight pages of abusive language, styling his landlord 'thief,' 'swindler,' and several such epithets, and he wished me to insert his tirade in the next issue of the paper. 'Misther Pether,' said he to me, 'make it sthronger—make it sthronger. My father has been on the land afore me, an' I'm not goin' to be turned out by any ould Turk.' I expostulated with Mickey, urging a compromise, and offering to speak to his landlord for him. Oh, no! he wouldn't do anything of the kind. At last, to quiet him, I consented to insert his diatribe, but not till the issue of the following week."

"Mr. O'Brady," interrupts the Rector, with surprise, "you really did not intend publishing that poor, foolish man's nonsense?"

Peter smiles knowingly.

"Sir," he answers, "one must employ tact with hot-headed folk, and I merely put him off until I thought out a method of arranging matters for the best."

"Go on, Peter, go on," says Uncle John.

"Well, sir, Mickey was thoroughly in earnest, and wanted me to print his effusion in big, red letters on a yellow poster, to be pasted about the town of Knockbeg. If he had his way he would have the letters a foot long, so that everyone could read them from the opposite side of the street. All I could gain from him was a delay of a week. Scarcely had Mickey quitted the office, when who should walk in but his landlord, Major Silverthorne. You know the Major, sir?"

"Yes, yes. Go on, Peter," exclaims Uncle John.

"Directly the Major came in he asked me if there was anything new, for, 'pon his honour,' he was dying of boredom in the place, and wanted something lively to amuse him. Everybody was so 'deuced good' in this hanged

town, there was no chance of a bit of an intrigue, or even a shindy, or anything to give a kick to one's liver. Really, he thought he must be off to the East again, life was too dreary in Knockbeg. Like a good fellow, couldn't I get up a sensation of some kind? Just then some mischievous spirit put it into my head to have a rise out of the doughty Major. I told him I was about to publish a gem of a threatening letter which one of the neighbouring farmers had written to his landlord, and that there would be terrible work about it. The Major's curiosity was all alive instantly; he wanted to know the name of the landlord—was it Neville, of Castle Neville? Oh! no; not the lord of the valley of Lusmore. Was it Holmes? No, no! Was it Smithwick, of Toonabeg? Oh! no; I wasn't going to tell, and I hadn't made up my mind, even yet, to insert the letter in *The Avenger*; for it was so stiff I was afraid of an action for libel. I was too poor to run such a risk. I read some parts of Mickey's effusion to the Major, picking out the most pungent passages, and, of course, being very careful to conceal the names. He was delighted, and thought it as good as badger-baiting or pig-sticking. Oh! confound it, I must publish it,

and in the very next number, and he would come himself and correct the proofs. It would be such a lark. How frightened the fellow would be! and wouldn't I even tell him the initials of his name? Was it Dawson, of the Glen? Oh! no; not at all; besides, I couldn't see my way clear to publishing it. I was afraid of the libel. Oh, hang the libel! He would stand five-and-twenty pounds towards the law expenses. After much pressing I accepted his offer; but said I would keep him to his promise of the five-and-twenty pounds. 'Hang me! didn't I know he was an officer and a gentleman, and that his word was his bond?' The Major left the office chuckling to himself. When he reached the door he turned back and called out: 'O'Brady, I'll never forgive you, if you don't insert that letter.' 'All right,' I answered; 'but, Major, remember the twenty-five pounds.'"

"Mr. O'Brady," says the Rector, "do you think this was quite honest?"

"Adam, my dear friend," cries Uncle John, "wait till you hear the end. Ha, ha! Peter, I can imagine the portly Major, with his short velvet shooting-jacket, and his Scotch cap stuck jauntily on the side of his head, and his thumb

in his waistcoat, urging you to print Mickey's tirade. Ha, ha, ha! go on, Peter, go on."

"Well, sir," continues Peter, "for several days I was pestered by both the Major and Mickey Dwyer, rushing in and out of my office at all sorts of unearthly hours, Mickey wanting me to make the letter stronger, and the Major trying to worm out of me the name of the obnoxious landlord. On post-day Mickey Dwyer came in, and I had the proofs of his letter ready to show him. He was in a ridiculous state of excitement, and, to pacify him, I was forced to get my foreman to put all the strongest expressions in big capitals, interspersed with innumerable italics and notes of exclamation."

"Surely, Mr. O'Brady, you never printed that letter!" exclaims the Rector.

"Why not, sir?" says Peter, with a hypocritical air of simplicity.

"Go on, Peter, go on," says Uncle John; "what happened next?"

"While Mickey was still with me, from my post at the window I espied the Major approaching. 'Quick! Mickey,' I cried, 'quick! Hide yourself—here is the Major.' 'Why for should I hide myself, Misther Pether?' said



Mickey, 'I'm not afraid av the ould haythin.' Instead of making any answer I bundled Mickey underneath the table, and dragged down the inky cloth cover to the ground in front of him. Scarcely had I managed to conceal him when the Major stepped in. 'O'Brady,' said he, 'have you that precious letter in print?' 'Here it is,' I answered, giving him part of it, *minus* the names. 'By Jove, it is a splendid production. Those capitals are simply the making of it,' he exclaimed admiringly; 'but look here now, who is it? I wish it would turn out to be Dick Neville, of Lusmore. It makes me sick to hear Dick always bragging about his tenants.' Here Mickey grew fidgety under the table. I was standing leaning against it, and I gave a kick backwards to steady him. 'Now, Major,' I said, 'what about the money? I'm not going to risk a libel for nothing.' 'All right, O'Brady,' he answered, as, producing his bank-book, he handed me a cheque for twenty-five pounds. 'Now,' added he, 'I depend on you to keep me twenty copies of *The Avenger* with that letter in it. Won't you tell me the name? Give me only a hint,' he persisted, 'and I'll soon guess.' Here I had to give Mickey another kick to keep him still. 'Well,

Major,' said I, 'look here. Let us talk plainly. You wouldn't like a thing of that kind to be published about yourself, would you? To have all your friends at the County Club reading it and jeering at you?' 'Why, not exactly, O'Brady, but then you see it is not meant for me, and why shouldn't I, like most good Christians in the army, relish the fun of the other fellow's discomfiture? Ha! ha! ha! Come, there's a good fellow, tell me; who is it?' Here, before I could stop him, Mickey Dwyer rushed from under the table, in his haste pulling the cover, with writing-desk, books, and ink-bottles, all over the floor. 'Who is it but yerself, ye ould haythin?' cried Mickey, squaring up in front of his astonished landlord with doubled fists. 'Id's yerself, an' that's my letther about ye that's goin' in to *The Avenger* this very day, an' a nice andrewmartin ye'll be makin' in it, ye ould Turk!' 'Mickey Dwyer,' exclaimed the Major, in a tone of stupefied amazement, as he glanced from one to the other of us. 'Ay, Mickey Dwyer, an' Mickey Dwyer's letther, too,' screamed Mickey. 'Do ye hear that, ye ould Dianeeshus of a tyrant?' I could scarcely keep my countenance, the man looked so comical with his purple face all smudged with dirt

picked up under my table. The Major was literally dumb from surprise, and stood staring, perplexed and open-mouthed, at his wrathful tenant, who alternately shook the letter and his fist in his landlord's face. 'Come, be quiet, Mickey,' said I, thinking it high time to interfere. Catching him by the arm, I tried to urge him into the hall; but he struggled hard to remain. 'Let me go, Misther Pether, I'm here now, and I mane to give a taste av me mind to that ould Turk there.' 'Hush, you fool,' I whispered; 'you will spoil everything.' By dint half of cajoling, half of force, I got Mickey into the hall, and then took him to the printer's office and gave him in charge to my foreman. On my return to the front premises I expected a torrent of abuse from the Major, but to my surprise he took the artifice in good part, and cried: 'Ha, ha! O'Brady, you have given me a sensation indeed. I never heard of a completer sell. But, you rogue, you never meant to publish that letter.' 'Easy, Major, easy,' I replied. 'Renew Mickey Dwyer's lease, and I'll destroy his letter.' 'Hang the rascal!' he exclaimed; 'do you think I'll ever forgive him for calling me an old Turk?' 'Oh, yes, you will,' I said, soothing him. Then I went to fetch Mickey, and gave him his cue

how to act. I had some trouble with him at first, for he was so proud of his composition that he didn't like the idea of not seeing it in the newspaper. However, after reasoning with him, he consented to be led by me. He entered, with a conciliatory smile, and apologised to the Major, promising to turn over a new leaf if his kind landlord would allow him to remain on at the old terms. Well, the Major was easily wheedled; besides, the letter frightened him. He hated to be made a butt of by his friends."

Peter pauses for breath—and then continues :

"In the next copy of *The Avenger* appeared a paragraph headed 'A Munificent Gift,' praising our worthy townsman, Major Silverthorne, for giving five-and-twenty pounds to be distributed among the poor. When I cashed the Major's cheque I sent ten to the Sisters of Mercy for the sick poor, ten I gave to the Rector of our town for the same purposes, and the balance I spent on improving *The Avenger*. That, sir, is what came of Mickey Dwyer's threatening letter."

"Capital, Peter, capital!" cries Uncle John, as he lolled back in his chair and laughed.

The Rector, on the contrary, looks very grave.

“Mr. O’Brady,” says he, in a voice of mild reproof, “how could you reconcile it with your conscience to keep Major Silverthorne’s money, even for charitable purposes, when he had consented to reinstate Mickey Dwyer !”

Uncle John always maintains that the Rector and myself are both sadly lacking in the sense of humour. I don’t know about the dear old man, but I am certain that I like a genuine joke as well as anyone. Gerald and I have been highly amused watching Sally Breen, while Peter O’Brady is relating his story. Sally had been listening outside the window, her rough-tanned elbows on the ledge, and her wide mouth agape as if swallowing every word. When Peter comes to the part where Mickey Dwyer rushes from beneath the table, Sally’s eyes dilate, and she frantically wags her mop of a head as if she thoroughly enjoys it. As soon as the editor of *The Avenger* ceases speaking, he stretches himself carelessly backwards, and Sally, carried away by her admiration, pushes her fist through the open window, and gives him a sounding thump on the back.

“Hooray ! More power to ye, Misther Pether O’Brady ! Bud sure it’s yerself, *avic*, is the darlint av them all !”

“Sarah, my princess, gently, gently,” says Peter, as he stoops to pick up his eye-glass, which the force of the blow had not alone knocked from his eye, but also had broken loose from its guard, and sent flying to the floor.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DAGGER AND THE RING.

"PETER, will you have anything to eat?" asks Uncle John.

"No, sir," is the answer. "I dined at Mrs. Fogarty's on my way here."

Uncle John rises, goes to the cupboard in the corner of the room, and, unlocking it, takes out a long bottle covered with cobwebs.

"Come, Peter," says he, "I've got some of your favourite vintage, and we must drink your and the Major's health in it."

"The offer is tempting, sir," says Peter, as he gazes with longing at the dust-encrusted bottle.

Sally, from her post outside the window, is still contemplating Peter O'Brady with an air of admiration, and takes no heed of the significant gestures I address to her. Full of household

cares, I marvel how things are to get on if I am to be held in bondage much longer in the parlour. Fond of the kitchen, indeed! How much could Uncle John eat with his delicate appetite if I didn't superintend Jane's cooking, and if I didn't coax him to be hungry by the smell of those savoury, appetising dishes which I concoct myself? Fond of the kitchen, indeed! I am sure I am not, I am much fonder of being out on the hill-top in this bright, balmy weather.

"Sally," I cry, "tell Jane to bring some glasses."

I don't want uncle to use those beautiful fragile ones which are in the cupboard. They might get broken.

"Yis, Miss Bride, yis in a minit. Arrah, sure, but he is the rale darlint," she exclaims, as she gives a parting glance at Peter O'Brady.

Jane brings the glasses, and Uncle John unfastens the string which binds me to his chair.

"Bride," said he, "I expect some guests to-night. Have a couple of rooms prepared for them."

"Yes, uncle," I answer with alacrity. I am glad to escape. I feel cramped from being so long in one position. After giving my orders to Jane I put on my scarf and hat, and, taking a small



basket and a pair of scissors with me, I go out. As I pass the parlour window, on my way into the garden, Gerald Moore sees me and asks may he come also. I nod consent, and presently we are busy cutting the withered blossoms off my rose-bushes.

"How nice," I exclaim, "to live always out of doors! It is so oppressive to be cooped up in a room like birds in a cage. Don't you think so, Mr. Moore?"

"I wouldn't mind the cage," he answers, smiling, "if I had only someone in it with me."

"Sally Breen for instance," I retort. "Come, Mr. Moore," I add, "help me to make a wreath." I gather some buds and leaves, and then we sit down on a rustic bench, sheltered by a thick privet hedge, which divides our garden from the adjoining bleaching-ground. As I twine the flowers, Gerald suggests little touches here and there.

"Miss Killeen," says Gerald, "do you like the schoolmaster?"

"I hate him," is my answer, given with unusual violence. "He is always coming about the house under some pretext or another, and I can't bear him."

"The miserable sneak!" cries Gerald, and his eyes flash dangerously, "if I catch him annoying you I'll thrash him within an inch of his life."

I am very sorry I have mentioned about Pat Mahon's haunting the neighbourhood of the chapel-house, for Gerald is so impetuous, he may do something rash.

"Your uncle," I venture to say, "considers the schoolmaster a very estimable young man, and perhaps he may be so, although I don't like him."

"Estimable scoundrel, more likely," says Gerald. "Uncle Adam is so kind-hearted that he can't think bad of anybody. I could believe Pat Mahon capable of any low, mean act."

"Oh, Mr. Moore, don't be so uncharitable."

We are silent for some minutes, and I go on twining the wreath. Our garden is full of wild song-birds, and hundreds of the saucy little things come twittering around us, seeking the crumbs which I daily give them. One tiny feathered mendicant is so bold that he ventures to hop on my lap and actually pecks at my fingers. Uncle John says that by continually finding food for those small birds, I have rendered them incapable of getting their own

living, and have wronged them by destroying their self-reliance. To prove his argument, he brought me some chapters of Political Economy to read ; but these chapters only treated of the poor-law system. What possible connection could there be between workhouses and my sweet, wandering, wee pensioners ? Of course, Uncle John couldn't have been serious. I push the small bird off my wreath, but he hops back persistently.

"Don't turn him away. Poor boy, let him stay while he can."

Gerald's voice sounds so sadly that I stare at him in surprise. His face is grave and mournful.

"What is the matter ?" I ask sympathetically.

"I am going to America," is the unexpected answer.

"Going away from Lusmore," I cry with a gasp of dismay.

"Yes ; why should I waste my time dawdling about here ? What opening is there for a man in Ireland who has not capital ? I am sure to make a fortune in America, and then I will return to Lusmore. Miss Killeen," he continues, with a glow on his face, "will you miss me a little ?"

I turn aside my head. Gerald going away !  
How dull everything will be now in the valley !

"Tell me," he repeats entreatingly, "will you miss me ?"

I turn round and look him straight in the face.  
I know I am blushing ; but what have I to be ashamed of, even if I do blush ?

"We will all miss you," I say bravely, "and I wish we were all going to America, too. I can't bear parting with any of my friends."

"I don't want that," he exclaims. "I only want to know if *you* will miss me ?"

"Hush !" I whisper, "there is someone at the other side of the hedge." We hear laughter and loud voices in the adjoining bleaching-ground. It is our servant, Jane, and Sally, who are getting in the clothes off the grass. Quite plainly their tones are borne to us on the evening breeze.

"There's a *raison*," says Sally, "to prevent her marryin'. Miss Bride Killeen will never marry, exceptin' it might be Misther O'Brady."

"Mr. O'Brady must be near on forty, ould enough to be her father," cries Jane, scoffingly. "Sure, there's Mr. Gerald Moore—iv he wasn't a black Prodestin they'd make a fine couple, if ye like."

“Mr. Gerald Moore, *inagh!*” shrieks Sally, with a wild laugh. “He’ll never marry Miss Bride Killeen. He may carry his goods to another market. They all know that Miss Bride has a snug bit av money, an’ that’s what they are all afther. Mark my words, Jane, she’ll never marry the Rector’s nephew. Gerald Moore, *inagh!*”

Oh, those hateful, hateful women! I feel as if I must sink through the ground with sheer shame. Oh, how dreadful of Gerald to have heard their horrid gossip! I don’t know what to do, or where to turn. I can never look him in the face again—never, never. I get up hastily, letting my hat and the wreath fall. I must hide myself somewhere, anywhere. Oh, those hateful women, how I detest their gossiping ways! With a sudden impulse I run swiftly down the gravel path, out through the garden-gate, across the lawn into the bower library, and there, flinging myself on the couch, I bury my burning face in the pillows. I am shamed beyond measure. I can never meet his eyes again—never, never. Soon I hear a step; he has followed me.

“Oh, go away, Mr. Moore,” I cry, without raising my head, and covering the side of my

face with my hand, the more effectually to screen it. "Oh, please go away, do!"

"Miss Killeen, you are not vexed with me?"

"Oh, go away," I repeat. "Please go away!"

He comes nearer, and sitting down on a low chair lays his hand gently on my sleeve.

"Miss Killeen," he says, "don't be vexed with me; it was not my fault."

"Oh! go away. Please *do* go away."

"Miss Killeen," he continues humbly, "never mind what they say. You are so good and so beautiful that everybody must love you for yourself alone, and I don't think myself worthy to tie the latchet of your shoe even."

"Oh! Mr. Moore, don't talk like that," I answer, not venturing to raise my head, but peeping at him from underneath my fingers, "I am not beautiful at all. It is only from kindness you say it. Wait till you see Miss Neville."

"I don't think anyone in the whole world could equal you, Bride, dear—dearest Bride," he says, as taking my hand he raises it to his lips and kisses it. In an instant I jump up, my face on fire, my eyes flashing indignantly.

"How dare you do that?" I cry; but he looks so abashed at my change of manner that I almost regret my cross tones. All my vexation,

however, disappears as I catch sight of my dear little Kerry cow standing between the open glass doors watching us. I burst out laughing, and Gerald laughs too. Drimin, the kindly creature, lows affectionately, and makes an attempt to come into the library to me.

“Isn’t she a darling?” I cry to Gerald, as, hurrying to the door, I push her backwards, lest she might smash the glass. “Come, little rover,” I say to her, as I catch her by one of the horns, “come back to your paddock.”

Drimin lows again contentedly, as I pull her along after me. Gerald brings up the rear, carrying my hat and wreath.

“This is my own, my very own cow,” I say to him. “Mrs. Fogarty gave her to me all for myself, and Drimin does love me.”

Whilst I speak the sun begins to sink behind the hill of Kyleneamanna, and the sky above us and all around is radiant with the glory of colour. We hear the lowing of cattle in the distant farmyards, and on the light evening wind is wafted the scent of new-mown hay from adjacent meadows. Gerald Moore is silent, and carelessly swings my hat to and fro, to the imminent destruction of the blossomed wreath which he has wound round its crown.

"How lovely!" I appeal to him, as I watch the clouds roll one over the other, in billowy banks of white and amber-edged rose and rich violet and saffron-gold; "how lovely!" I repeat, as I stand and draw in with eagerness delicious draughts of the refreshing air.

Gerald looks down at me and smiles.

"I was not admiring nor thinking of the sunset," said he, after a pause.

"Of what were you thinking, then?" I ask.

"I was thinking of—of Drimin."

"Of Drimin!" I say, with surprise.

As I mention her name, my dear little Kerry cow rubs up against me and playfully wriggles her horn out of my hand. She knows her own name so well.

Gerald smiles again.

"Miss Killeen," says he, "I can understand Drimin unfastening the gate to get to you. If you were shut up in the strongest fortress in the world, behind a thousand bolts and bars, I would find a way to break through them all to reach you."

"Oh! Mr. Moore, don't talk like that." Then I add, I am afraid a little wickedly: "Suppose I go into a convent; neither you nor Drimin can come to me there."



Gerald starts, and gives a fierce glance at me. How savage he can look sometimes !

“Surely,” he says sternly, “you would not devote yourself to a living death ? I would tear down the walls of any convent where you might bury yourself away from us.”

I laugh gaily.

“Oh ! I was only in fun,” I cry. “You didn’t think I was in earnest ? I have no intention of immuring myself in a convent. What could Uncle John do without me ?”

“What would your uncle do ? and what would Drimin do ? and what would all the rest of your friends do ? and what—what could I do ?” says Gerald, with brightening eyes, as he put out his hand and tried to grasp mine in his.

I step swiftly aside and run across the lawn to the paddock-gate.

Drimin races after me as fast as her fat, shaking sides will let her. I hustle her into the paddock and lock her in. She pokes her head over the topmost bar of the wooden gate, and gazes at me reproachfully as I give her some moist herbs to chew.

“Bride, Bride, Gerald, Gerald,” calls Uncle John to us from the parlour window. “Come here, children ; I have something to show you.”

We hurry indoors. Uncle John is standing with a dagger in his hand, which he is showing to the Rector and Peter O'Brady.

This, then, must be what the brown paper parcel contained.

The hilt of the dagger is studded with gems of varied hues—wine-red, and dazzling white, and sheeny emerald.

"Oh, uncle!" I exclaim, "what lustrous jewels! Who sent it to you, and where did you get it?"

"One question at a time, grandmother."

"Oh, but tell me," I persist, as I stretch out my hand to touch it. "How the stones glisten!"

"Take care, Bride, take care," said Peter O'Brady; "the blade is probably poisoned."

"It is a present," answered Uncle John, to my question, "which José Roques sent me from Cuba, and which he forwarded through Peter O'Brady."

"Oh, uncle," I exclaim, "do let me look at it closer."

"Take care, Miss Killeen," says Gerald anxiously, "you may hurt yourself. Put it back in the sheath, sir, before you give it to her," he adds to Uncle John.

"The hilt must be of immense value, I should think, John," said the Rector. "See with what fire the rubies and diamonds shine."

"And the opals," I cry. "Watch how their hues change as uncle turns the dagger about in the light."

"Such a fuss about a few bits of painted glass," mutters Gerald.

"But they are real—real gems, not glass," I expostulate. "What lovely rings they would make."

"Do you like rings, Bride?" asks the Rector. "I have a unique one; if you care to see it I will show it to you the next time you call at the rectory."

"I would like to see it very much," I answer. "Is your ring set with precious stones like the dagger?"

"No, there are no gems in it, merely gold. It is an Indian puzzle ring of very peculiar workmanship, and when on your finger, unless you know where to find the secret spring, you will not be able to take the ring off again."

"How curious," I exclaim; "but I am sure I could get it off, though."

The Rector shakes his head doubtfully, and said :

"Come back with us this evening and try."

"Uncle John is expecting visitors," I say, "and I must remain at home."

"I would prefer your not being here when they arrive," interposes Uncle John, "they may have some business to arrange with me."

"Business," repeats Peter O'Brady. "Who are your visitors, sir—do I know them?"

"No, Peter, no," answers uncle hastily; "that is," he corrects himself, "I believe you have met Clarke."

"What! Clarke—who——"

"Hush, Peter," interrupts Uncle John, with a glance of caution towards us.

"All right, sir," says Peter. Then turning to me, he asks:

"Bride, have you any message for Mrs. Fogarty? I am going back there to spend the night."

"Be sure and thank her for the cream she sent me. She must have had some work to get it from that old dairy-woman of hers. Tell Mrs. Fogarty as soon as the hill meadow is mown I will come over to Baltore some afternoon. I am too busy just now."

Whilst I am speaking Jane enters the room carrying Uncle John's reading-lamp, in case he

may want it by-and-by. I take the lamp from her and place it on a side-table out of the way. Uncle still holds the dagger in his hand, and Jane stands gaping at it.

"I must be going now, John," says the Rector. "Bride, put on your hat and come with us, and I will show you my Indian puzzle ring."

"Uncle," I ask, "where are you going to put the Cuban dagger?"

"Over the chimney-piece, probably. We can hang it on the wall, it will be a very conspicuous ornament."

"I am sure," I say playfully, to the Rector, "if your ring is a curiosity, our Cuban dagger is a treasure."

I hear an exclamation behind me. Turning, I see our superstitious servant, Jane, crossing herself and making rapid curtseys in front of her cabbage-eating saint enshrined over the piano.

"Jane, what is the matter?" I ask sharply.

"Miss Bride, *alanna*," she says in a whisper full of awe, and not ceasing to cross herself while speaking, "whin ye spake av a knife an' a ring in the same breath it manes blood betune the two."

"Go away, you stupid woman ; it is a dagger, and not a knife."

"It's all the same, miss. It cuts, *alanna*, it cuts." Then, dipping deeply down in front of her saint, she mutters: "Holy saint—ah! thin, bud I don't know his name. What is it, miss?"

"Never mind," I answer, trying to repress my laughter; "any name will do."

"Miss Bride," she whispers, "don't go see that forrin ring, for there's sure to be blood betune it an' that quare forrin knife afore twenty moons have passed over yer head."

"You stupid woman," I cry, tired of her nonsense. "Take away those glasses and dust the table. I am going out for an hour or so, and be sure you have the linen properly aired for those two front rooms."

"Bride," says Uncle John, as he puts the dagger away on the mantelpiece, "don't forget to call at Kate Mahon's and give her the message for her son, the schoolmaster."

"That abominable sneak," mutters Gerald Moore under his breath.

"Very well, Uncle John, I shan't forget," I answer, as I go out in the hall to fetch the Rector's hat and stick.

## CHAPTER IV.

### GOING TO THE RECTORY.

WE have to pass through the village on our way to the rectory. The labourers coming home from work, bearing scythes across their shoulders, touch their forelocks in respectful salute, and the women smile and curtsy low as they go by. The faces of Uncle John's flock as they meet us light up with a pleasant expression, and they greet us gaily with a "God save you kindly, Miss Bride," "How are *you*, sir?" "A fine day for the hay, Mr. Moore." Mr. Glover's parishioners, on the other hand, reserved and formal, simply bid us a quiet "good evening," without adding either a wish or a remark. Young girls, in short, dark, flannel skirts, with low shoes, white stockings, and bright neckerchiefs, come along, carrying large pails of water

on their upright heads. It is a marvel to me how they manage to bend their knee to us without spilling a single drop. When Emily Neville was last in Lusmore she was so struck with our peasant girls' style of walking that she actually had a pail of water brought to the drawing-room to practise with herself. It was such fun. Her aunt, Mrs. Neville, was in terror every time Emily approached her, lest the pail might tumble on her, and Richard Neville seemed only nervous, lest his pretty cousin might get hurt in her frolic. Then, when the pail tottered at last, and smashed in its fall a small table, covered with costly ornaments, and deluged the velvet pile carpet, Emily laughed, and I laughed too. I know it was very rude of me to laugh, but I couldn't help it.

Leaving the village behind us, we enter the long avenue-like road, with trees on either side, which leads past Castle Neville even as far as the ivy-embowered Protestant church. The Rector occasionally stops and accosts one or other of his parishioners, and Gerald would fain have me linger behind at these moments with himself; but somehow I am very shy of Gerald since he overheard what those women said in the bleaching-ground, and I keep as



close as I can to the Rector, notwithstanding the appealing glances of his nephew. We reach the pretty Gothic lodge of Neville Castle, and we pause an instant to look through the gate. How solid and imposing the castle is, with its twin-towers and many-paned windows. How peacefully the still lake shines, with the projecting shadows of its long sedges and drooping willows. How symmetrically close the lawn is shorn; yet, in spite of their scientific gardeners, they can never rear such fruit and vegetables at the castle as we do at home in our own wild garden of the chapel-house. Again we wend our way along the road through the trees I love so much. All at once I am conscious that someone's eyes are fixed on me. If anyone gazes at me intently for a few seconds, I always feel it and grow strangely restless. Can it be Gerald? No, he is lost in thought, and staring straight in front of him. Turning to the opposite side of the road from Castle Neville, I notice two men behind the hedge in the field beyond. There is a gap in the furze bushes, and I see their heads plainly. They are watching us. One of them is the Italian-faced man Uncle John called Clarke; the other is a short, fair man, with a long, light beard, and a large,

slouched American hat drawn over his brow. The latter has his eyes fixed on me, and, as I look at him in return, he smiles such a cold, mocking smile; then they both draw back within the shade of the bushes. Who can they be? and why should they lie in ambush thus in the fields?

"Mr. Glover," I ask in an undertone, "have you noticed those two men?"

"Where, Bride, where?" responds the Rector, and he looks around bewildered. "I have seen nobody since we passed the castle. Where are they?"

"In Turner's field, behind the gap," I reply.

"Poachers, probably," says Gerald.

"Oh, no," I cry eagerly; "I am sure they are gentlemen, for one of them is the dark man who was at our window this afternoon."

"Most likely they are the guests expected by your uncle," suggests the Rector, "and that they are taking a stroll through the fields."

In spite of what Mr. Glover says, I believe those men were hiding there for some purpose. Why should they draw back when they attracted my attention, and why didn't the dark one come in to be introduced to us when he called at the chapel-house?

We resume our walk silently, but are soon roused by the sound of approaching wheels. An open carriage, occupied by two ladies, is driving rapidly along the road. When it comes near us it is suddenly checked in its course, and a clear, bird-like voice calls out to us :

“Mr. Glover ! Bride !”

A fleecy mass of soft laces, a ripple of golden hair, a merry, sparkling face, and we recognise Emily Neville, looking more winsome and bewitching than ever. Regardless of my dress, regardless of the champing horses, regardless of the wheels, I fling myself forward, and, throwing my arms around her neck, I embrace her several times.

“Dear—dear—dearest Emily,” I cry.

“Easy, child, easy !” she exclaims. “You will spoil my bonnet.”

“Oh, Emily, I am so glad to see your dear, dear face once more. I am so delighted you have come back again to us.”

Emily laughs such a seductive, trilling little laugh.

“Yes, Bride, really back again. Tired of gay sights and of good people who were always making moan over my wickedness, I managed to give them all the slip, and here I am.” Then,

with a malicious twinkle in her arch eyes, she whispers to me: "Bride, who is that new importation? Is he one of your beaux? What a pity he has hands; he doesn't know where to put them."

Emily alludes to Gerald Moore. The Rector has gone around to the other side of the carriage to speak to Mrs. Neville, Emily's aunt, and Gerald is standing alone a few paces distant. I am sure he has very nicely-shaped hands, and really beautiful filbert nails. I don't know what Emily means by his not knowing where to put them.

"You have not met my nephew, Gerald Moore, Emily?" says the Rector, smiling at her across her aunt.

"No," she answers; then, with the air of an imperious little queen, she beckons Gerald to approach her. When he draws near, she bends her eyes on him with such a scrutinising expression of whimsical banter that he moves back uneasily. "So you are Gerald Moore," she says, as she vouchsafes him the ends of two tiny rose-tipped fingers released expressly from a tiny pale gray glove. "I am very glad to see you."

Gerald came nearer, and smiles down at the bright, babyish face. He is amused by the air

of half-condescension, half-authority, assumed by Emily. He takes her proffered fingers gently for a moment, and, before letting them go, said :

“ I have heard so much of Miss Neville that I will find it difficult to believe we have not met before.”

“ Oh, how delightful ! ” she ejaculates, with a sigh of relief. “ I do hate to meet new people. So just imagine that you and I are very, very old acquaintances, and then we are sure to get along very well. Am I not right, Bride ? ” she adds, addressing me. “ Come, give me your opinion. Don’t you think Mr. Moore and I will become great friends ? ”

I start at the question, and shrink from the meaning look which accompanies it. How captivating Emily is, and what a piquant charm there is in her slightest gesture ! Her winning ways have never struck me so much before. Bride Killeen, Bride Killeen, are you growing meanly envious of your friend ?

“ Well, Bride,” petulantly repeats Emily, “ do you think Mr. Moore and I will be friends ? You know us both.”

“ You can make anyone you like your friend, Emily,” I answer. “ But you mustn’t neglect your old friends for the new. When are you

coming to see Uncle John? You are a great favourite of his."

"Dear Father John!" she exclaims. "I must drive over to see him to-morrow. Shall we not, aunt?"

Mrs. Neville languidly raises herself from her recumbent position at the question, and says:

"Whatever you wish, my dear." Then she sinks gracefully backwards again.

"When did you arrive, Emily?" asks the Rector.

"Only last night," is the reply. "One of my whims. You remember how whimsical I used to be; and as I grow older I grow *worser*."

"Where have you been for the last two years?"

"Where have I not been?" she quickly replies. "Here, there, everywhere. Rome, Egypt, Monaco—St. Peter's, the Pyramids, and the gambling-tables. I am sick of sight-seeing, lion-hunting, picture-staring, and really do crave a little repose. Dear me! I am so tired of it all, tired of novelty and change; and I have come here to seek variety in sameness."

"You should have left your restless self behind, Emily," says the Rector, smiling. "I am only afraid we will soon have you flying off at a

tangent again, leaving us to regret the summer-bird flown."

"Not the slightest intention of flying away ; don't hope it," she says blithely. "I have made up my mind to stop here and create a revolution in the valley. Richard is getting plump and lazy ; so I intend to stir him up by setting his tenants by the ears. Between that and flirting with yourself and Father John, I will have sufficient employment for my restless self."

"Fie, fie! Emily, my dear!" comes faintly, in remonstrance, from Mrs. Neville.

"Oh! please don't, aunt. Everybody has been crying 'fie, fie' to me for the last two years, and, at length, they made me feel so naughty that I ran away. Try and believe I am very good ; or, at least, pretend you do so, aunt, for a little while, or you'll have me off again."

"Don't mind me, dear ; don't mind me," is Mrs. Neville's meek reply ; and her lively niece doesn't seem to have the slightest intention of minding her either.

"By the way," says Emily, "I saw two men whispering behind a hedge as we drove along. They appear to be strangers."

"Oh, Emily!" I cry ; "then you have seen those two men also ? One dark and one fair."

"Yes, Bride," she says, mimicking me, "one dark and one fair. Who are they? or would they be worth while trying to fascinate?"

"I don't know who they are at all," is my answer. "Uncle John seems to be acquainted with the dark one."

"Well, never mind, I will soon find out all about them myself. Now, Bride, the next spare day you have you must spend it with me at Castle Neville, and I will show you some sketches I have brought with me of the different places I have been to since I last saw you."

"I will be delighted," I eagerly respond. "And won't you tell me all about them and about the customs of their people also?"

"Tell you all about them!" she echoes, in a tone of dismay. "Why, you simple little rustic, I remember nothing but being whirled here and there against my will, and talking to and being talked at by a lot of stupid persons, who cared as much for me as I did for them. I am really weary of this endless rushing about. And where is the use of it after all?"

"Miss Neville evidently has forgotten," puts in Gerald, "what are the principal benefits derived from travel—enlargement of our views,



the getting rid of stale prejudices, and the accumulation of new ideas."

"Ha! ha!" laughs Emily, as she tosses her pretty head until its wreath of golden curls blows dishevelled round her bright face. "Ha! ha! ha! accumulation of ideas! Is your nephew a pupil of Lord Bacon, Mr. Glover? Why, you great silly boy, if you possess one single original idea in your brain you are sure to lose it in travelling. Ha! ha! accumulation! Yes, just the kind of accumulation which was rife at the building of the tower of Babel. More like confusion, to my thinking."

The carriage horses have been pawing fretfully for some time, and now give unmistakable signs of becoming unruly. Poor Mrs. Neville is shivering with nervousness.

"Emily, my dear," says she, in a low tone, "don't you think that—that Richard will be waiting for us?"

"Richard can take care of himself," is the impatient reply. "But, aunt," she resumes, in a gentler tone, "you must be tired, so we will say good-bye."

However, Mrs. Neville suddenly changes her mind and wants to stop a little longer.

"Let us wait a minute, Emily," she says, "I

see Kate Mahon's son coming towards us. I wish to ask him about his mother."

"The schoolmaster," says Emily; then giving vent to a short, malicious laugh, she turns to the coachman, and says: "Drive on, Jeffars."

"But, Emily, my dear," remonstrates her aunt, "I wish to speak to Pat Mahon about his mother."

"His mother—his mother!" repeats her niece, in accents of scornful pride. "Kate Mahon was your housekeeper; you always paid her her due, and I fail to see why you should concern yourself further about her. Drive on, Jeffars."

Then Emily waves her hand in adieu to us, and drops back nonchalantly beside her aunt, while Jeffars makes the horses start off at a smart pace.

"Don't forget to-morrow, Emily," I call after them; "Uncle John will be so pleased to see you."

She smiles and waves her hand again, as she looks back at the sound of my voice.

Pat Mahon has espied the carriage from some distance, and is hastening to come up with it while it is yet standing. As we have seen, he is too late; and, breathless, he stands at the side of the road until the carriage and its occupants

whirls past him. However, he is not to be baulked of a salute; raising his hat, he calls out, so loudly that we hear the words quite plainly :

“How do you do, Mrs. Neville? Miss Emily, I am glad to see you, miss. You are welcome to Lusmore, miss.”

As Jeffars at this moment lashes the horses to a gallop, I take it for granted that, no matter what Mrs. Neville might have done, Emily does not return the schoolmaster's salute. Pat Mahon stands watching the swiftly-retreating carriage, and makes no attempt to approach us.

“Don't you think,” I ask the Rector hesitatingly, “I had better go back to Pat Mahon and tell him about the inspector coming to the schools?”

“No, Miss Killeen,” says Gerald Moore fiercely, “you will *not* go back to speak to Pat Mahon. On your way home you can call at his mother's and leave the message your uncle gave you for her.”

“That will be the better plan,” says the Rector, in a gentle tone.

Then we continue on our way.

“Isn't she lovely?” I ask enthusiastically of Gerald.

"If you mean Miss Neville," he answers, "she is rather dollish. Besides, I don't admire very fair women, they are generally fickle and frivolous."

"Oh," I cry indignantly. "Emily is neither fickle nor frivolous, and she is my very dear friend, and I love her very much. Is she frivolous?" I appeal to the Rector.

"My dear Bride," answers the kind old man, with a frank smile, "Miss Neville is a very charming young lady; but then tastes differ, and, besides, my nephew knows really very little of Miss Neville."

Presently the ivy-embowered church comes into view, and then the rectory, with its rose-covered front. There are two horses standing at the door of the rectory, and a groom in the Neville livery is holding one of them.

"You have visitors, Mr. Glover," I say timidly. "I'll not go in now. You can show me the ring another time."

"Never mind, dear, come in. It can only be Richard Neville."

We enter the neat rectory parlour, with its light, cheerful furniture, its spotless muslin curtains, its ebony and gold cabinets. How prim it all is! How different to the irregular

picturesqueness of our sitting-room at the chapel-house !

There are those vases all in a mathematical row on the mantelpiece, like a set of soldiers on parade. I feel as if I want to knock one of them over, for sake of variety, they are so dreadfully precise. With what a subtle sweetness the perfume of the roses on the outside wall penetrates into the room ! One straggling branch has escaped from its thralldom, and with its numerous leaves and pinky buds is drooping on the window-sill. I hope the Rector's Puritanical housekeeper won't notice it just yet ; she would be sure to fetch a hammer and nail and fix it back again on the outer wall.

Richard Neville is standing before a picture, a recent purchase of the Rector's, who bought it because he found in the expression of the benign, fair countenance a resemblance to that of his loved young wife who died ere they were two years together.

The owner of Castle Neville and the lord of all the fair valley of Lusmore turns at the sound of our footsteps, and greets us heartily.

Richard Neville is about thirty years of age, middle height, broad-shouldered, of a florid complexion, with clear, bright-blue eyes,

and a general air of manliness and attractive candour.

"I have come to trouble you, sir, about some leases," he says, addressing the Rector.

"Leases, Richard ! What leases ?"

The landlord of the valley looks hesitatingly from Gerald Moore to me, and then bursts out impulsively :

"Well, you see, the greater part of the leases granted by my father are on the eve of expiring, and I wish to consult you about their renewal. My agent advises several changes, but I was loth to consent to anything of the kind without having the opinions of yourself and Father John Kennedy."

"I am at your service any time you like, Richard."

"Would it be convenient to you to come to the castle the day after to-morrow, sir ?"

"I will make it convenient," answers Adam Glover. "And now, Bride," he continues, turning to me, "I will go and get the ring I brought you here to see."

The Rector leaves us, and goes upstairs.

Leases ! Most of the leases in Lusmore about to expire ! How lucky for the tenants that they have such a good landlord ! But even if he

were otherwise he could not touch us at the chapel-house. Christopher Neville, Richard's father, gave Uncle John a lease of ninety-nine years of the ground about our house.

During the Rector's absence upstairs there is an embarrassing pause. Gerald Moore is so silent when not excited by any topic, and he always expresses such contempt for small talk.

"Mr. Neville," I say at length, "we met your cousin and Mrs. Neville out driving. And Emily looks nicer than ever. I hope she is going to remain a long, long time with us."

"I hope so, too, Miss Killeen," says Richard Neville in a dreary tone. "My mother and myself never have half as much of Emily's society as we would wish to have. By-the-bye," he continues, "as you came along the road did you notice two men in Turner's field? .Not that two men in a field is a strange sight in the valley any day," he adds, with a laugh; "but their appearance struck me as rather singular as I rode by."

"Oh, yes, I saw them," I answer eagerly. "One of them, the light one, had such a cold expression. Did you notice it, Mr. Neville?"

"I can't say that I did," replies the landlord. "I am not as quick at catching expressions as

you ladies are. Emily has a sharp eye for anything of that kind."

Whilst we are still speaking, the Rector returns, carrying a tiny box. We cluster round him. He presses a spring, which opens the lid of the small box. Within, embedded in cotton wool, there lies a ring, consisting of several twisted links of delicately-traced gold.

"This," remarks the Rector, as he lifted it out of its soft, white nest, "is the Indian puzzle ring. It was sent to my wife, the first year of our marriage, by her youngest brother, Percy."

"Ah!" says Richard Neville, "wasn't that the poor fellow, Percy Massy, who was torn to shreds by the tiger when out hunting with some of his brother-officers in Bengal?"

"The same. My dear wife never recovered the shock of his death. When dying she besought me never to part with Percy's ring. My poor darling's nerves were so weakened that she got it into her head that if I ever lost this ring some evil would happen to me."

"How strange!" I exclaim. "But, Mr. Glover, you said I could not take off the ring. Do let me put it on and try."

The Rector smiles, as I hold out my hand. He lets the ring drop over my third finger, and it



was so deep that it reached fully to the middle joint.

"It is so loose!" I cry; but, even as I speak, I am conscious of a tingling sensation throughout my hand, and the ring grows tighter and tighter, until at last it is quite close-fitting.

"Now, Bride, take it off if you can," says the Rector playfully.

I pull and pull, but all in vain; I can't even stir the ring, and only succeed in bruising my finger.

"Let me try, Miss Killeen," puts in Gerald Moore. "Perhaps I can manage it. See how you hurt your hand. Your skin is so tender." Gerald looks at me softly as he says these words, and I can't help blushing, for Richard is laughing at us.

"Oh, I am sure you can't move it, Mr. Moore," I answer, as I draw away from his side of the table.

"You had better give in and say you can't do it, Miss Killeen," says Richard Neville.

Irritated by his laugh, I try to twist the ring off. I pull and pull, but all in vain. At last my finger is quite red and swollen, and so sore that I can scarcely touch it.

"Come, Bride," says the Rector, "you will

have to give it up. Look here and I will show you the puzzle."

Taking my hand in his, he points out several funny little figures cut at irregular intervals on the surface of the ring.

"Count slantways nine of those little figures, and then count three sideways from the ninth, and give the third one a turn, and the ring will come off."

Suiting the action to the word, as the Rector gives a turn to the third figure at the end, off flies the ring with a bound on to the table.

"How extraordinary!" I exclaim, delighted. I am so pleased that, in spite of the soreness of my finger, I insist on trying on the ring two or three times successively, until at last I am as clever as its owner in the knack of getting it off again.

"Bride," says the Rector, "you are one of Mrs. Powell's few favourites, and she will be offended if you leave the house without paying her a visit."

Mrs. Powell is the staid housekeeper who holds grim authority over the domestic affairs of the Rectory.

I bid the Rector and Richard Neville good-bye, and Gerald Moore follows me into the hall.

"Don't stay long with Mrs. Powell," he entreats. "Such a lovely evening for a walk. And then you mustn't forget the message to Kate Mahon."

"Oh! thank you for reminding me, Mr. Gerald, of that message."

Nodding my head to him, I hurry along the passage to the housekeeper's private room.

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### TO THE READER.

Gentle and most sympathetic reader, there is a disappointment in store for you. Bride Killeen, daunted by the too frequent repetition of the personal pronoun, positively refuses to continue this narrative. She maintains that instead of telling her Uncle John's story she has been merely talking about herself. She also urges, with some show of reason, it must be admitted, that while a tale related in the first person has the advantage of creating a more human interest in the mind of the reader, still it has many drawbacks, amongst others the impossibility of the narrator being in two places at one and the same time. The lady has, however, furnished us with the fullest details of all matters bearing on

our story, besides confiding to our hands some most important papers, and whilst sure that the charms of her natural style will be missed, we must try to place the materials given to us in the most presentable form we can. But we reserve to ourselves, still, the right of occasionally using Miss Killeen's own words where the thread of the narrative may require our so doing.

## CHAPTER V.

HINSON.

THE Rev. John Kennedy was seated alone at the centre table in his parlour on the evening of the day that his niece had gone to see the Rector's Indian puzzle-ring. A book-stand, on which was a ponderous old leather-bound Spanish edition of "Don Quixote," was pushed a little from before the priest of Lusmore, a shaded lamp was beside him, and the moonlight streamed in through the foliage over-arching the open window, making fantastic filigree on the thickly-carpeted floor. He had been, but was no longer, reading, and he now bent forward, his elbow on the table, one forefinger lightly touching his brow. A host of varying expressions hovered about his countenance. He looked as if he were haunted by the creation of Cervantes' brain.

The child-like tenderness of the lean old knight was visible mellowly under his lashes, while the rims of his lips quivered with the remembrance of Sancho's conceits.

The gravel crunched beneath a stealthy step, a pair of keen eyes peered cautiously through the open sash, and watched the priest for some time, as one might study the exterior of a fortress before trying the strength of it by a nearer inspection. Soon a faint sound broke the stillness, as if the watcher were vainly striving to suppress an inward laugh, which would burst forth for all his efforts to restrain it.

"Kennedy!" the name was uttered in a clear, low tone, but it failed to rouse the dreamer. "Kennedy! Kennedy! Kennedy!" was repeated, with three distinct intonations.

Father John started, as if waking from a sleep. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza slowly faded from the foreground, leaving in relief the blonde face of the fairer of the two men whom Bride Killeen had seen at the gap in Turner's field.

"Hinson!"

"Yes," was the response, given in a slightly sarcastic tone, "even Hinson."

"The door is ajar. Come round, James," said Father John, rising to welcome his visitor.

In a moment the two men were facing each other, hand grasped in hand—two men physically, morally, and intellectually opposed: the one tall, erect, bony, muscular, cast as it were in iron, with an eye, now that he had been roused, as sharp and glittering as an eagle's; the other, low-sized, round-shouldered, soft-featured, effeminate-voiced, with a certain indescribable suggestion of sleepiness underlying all his movements. And yet—strange anomaly—the latter was the practical nature, the former the ideal. They gazed into each other's eyes, Father John with a regard straight, keen, and questioning; Hinson with a shifting, uneasy glance, not from fear of encountering the other's look, but from dread lest his own might reveal more than he judged it prudent his tongue should tell.

"James, you are welcome—welcome to my humble home," said Father John with sincere heartiness. "The mere sight of you," he continued, "brings with it such a tide of pleasant recollections."

"Your hospitality is nothing new, Kennedy," replied Hinson, in a quiet tone. "I hope I will not be regarded too much in the light of an intruder by asking you for a few days' shelter."

"Intruder! Nonsense," said the priest, ap-

proaching the bell-pull. Before he could touch it, Hinson sprang hastily forward and arrested his hand.

"Stop!" he said, a faint current of agitation disturbing his usually languid manner. "Don't be so precipitate. I require nothing at present. Let us have a quiet talk. First of all, I beg that you do not mention my name to anyone, either inside or outside the house. Do I ask too much?"

"No," was the reply given in a vein of dry sarcasm, and Father John returned leisurely to his former seat at the table. "Would it be precipitate on my part to ask you to sit down? You will please tell me what name it suits you to go by whilst here?"

Hinson slipped easily into a low chair in the embrasure of the window, first looking cautiously out to see if there were any stray eaves-droppers in the vicinity; but he could discern nothing but the moonlight streaming over the gravel path, and the shadows of the silent lawn beyond.

"Call me Mister James. The name will do just as well as any other. And it has the advantage of being easily remembered."

"As you please," said the priest, in a cold,



measured voice. "Don't imagine because you are under my roof you are bound to give reasons for anything you choose to do. I would render no man an account of my actions, nor would I expect any man to do so to me. Your secret, whatever it may be, is safe from prying of mine. Now, let us talk of something else."

"No," answered Hinson, "I do not wish to talk of anything else. I want to tell you my reasons for concealing my name and my whereabouts. I have a project on foot at the present moment."

"Clarke gave me a hint to that effect," said Father John, as he leaned again on the table, and settled himself in an attitude of attention. "Well, James, what is it?"

Hinson, instead of replying, looked all round the angles of the room, out again through the window, and then down on the ground. Slowly he began smoothing his long, silky, blonde beard, as if by so doing he set in motion the machinery of his brain. What hint could Clarke have given? How much or how little had he told? What words, or form of words, would be best calculated to put Kennedy off the true track? For safety's sake it was necessary Father John should be told something was going on, lest, in

case they left him in total ignorance, he might by accident have his suspicions aroused, and then he would be sure not to rest until he had thoroughly sifted and investigated the whole matter.

In the ordinary sense of the term, Hinson had no intention of merely deceiving the priest as to the extent of their movement ; but he would have been more than mortal if he could have calmly contemplated the possibility of Father Kennedy, who had done nothing, stepping in over his head now and ousting him from the leadership of an organisation which it had cost so many weary years of secret toil of mind and body to bring to its present state of completeness.

Hinson was wary. He knew he was about to tread on dangerous ground, where but to slip was to lose all. He knew that, once the slightest shade of mistrust had crept into the priest's mind, all further concealment would be useless ; the only alternative left would be to accept the merit of disclosing that which would be inevitably found out without. Now, it was far from his intentions to let himself be reduced to this extremity ; he was playing a bold game, it is true, but the issue was to depend more on skill and calculation than on hazard.

He pondered and weighed, and weighed and pondered, his eyes fixed on the carpet.

Kennedy watched him with a smile half-curious, half-cynical.

"Kennedy," said Hinson, at length, as he ceased caressing his beard and raised his head from its stooped position. "I have made up my mind to be frank with you."

"Tut, tut," interrupted Father John, with an incredulous laugh. "Don't attempt an impossibility. Frankness is not one of your weaknesses, and to assume the guise of it would be a loutish piece of hypocrisy. It wouldn't sit well on you, clever actor as you may think yourself. Come, come," he concluded, in a tone that savoured slightly of impatience, "tell me of this project which lies fallow in your fertile brain."

After a brief pause, Hinson spoke in a softly modulated voice, the words distilling lazily, one by one, from his lips, whilst the keen, steely-gray eyes covertly watched Kennedy, so that by the changes of expression on the priest's mobile countenance the speaker might be better able to guide the course of his explanations.

"Kennedy, there is a movement on foot at present." Here he stopped, but finding the listener did not attempt to speak, he proceeded :

"Clarke and I have sought you out here solely to consult you on this matter, and my wishing to conceal my name arises from my not caring to awaken any suspicion as to the motive of my visit to you."

"A movement!" said Kennedy coldly. "That means that you are going to make another foolish attempt to upset the country and the people?"

"Not quite so foolish as you imagine," said Hinson, with a furtive smile, as he thought of what progress he had already made with his secret organisation.

"Who is the prime spirit of this new scheme?" carelessly asked Uncle John.

Hinson hesitated before answering, then, moving his body slightly forward, he said, in a very low tone:

"I am. Will you join us, Kennedy?" Was there a tremor in his voice as he asked this question? Why had Father Kennedy's face so suddenly changed? What caused the proud priest to flash his eagle eyes with such a stern, searching scrutiny on the questioner?

"So, James," said Father John, after a lengthened pause, during which his gaze never left Hinson until the latter winced beneath the

ordeal, "so, James, you are to be the coming man. You are to achieve what so many have failed in—you alone are to succeed in severing Ireland from England! Allow me to congratulate you. What an opinion you must have of all those wretched bunglers in the past, who have vainly attempted to do the same thing! Come, James, don't be foolish. The last affair ought to have warned you. How many more mice are we to expect to come forth from the seething mountain of your brain?"

"Will you join us?" reiterated Hinson, not a muscle moving in his impassible countenance.

"Will I join you?" said Kennedy, in a musing, changed tone, as his gaze wandered out into the night.

The sarcastic expression gradually faded away, and was succeeded by a strange wistfulness. Hinson's mouth twitched with suppressed expectancy. He wondered what thought could possibly be agitating Kennedy. But at this moment, in spite of Hinson's natural acuteness, he fell into the common error of gauging the working of another's mind by the experience drawn from the working of his own. John Kennedy could never by any possibility think as James Hinson, nor James Hinson as John

Kennedy. Thus, while Hinson was tormenting himself with all sorts of conjectures, Kennedy's thoughts had gone back nearly twenty years, to the period when he himself had been one of the hottest and most vehement of the Young Ireland party. Memories rushed thick and fast upon him; familiar forms peopled the empty space before him. There was young Meagher, of the rhythmic speech—soldierly, eloquent Meagher; Williams, with the wayward temperament of poet and wag; philosophic, earnest Martin; and his dearest friend of all, Mitchel—hawk-eyed, sharp-faced, large-souled, single-minded Mitchel. Once more Kennedy was in the midst of them, and, lost in his reveries on the past, he forgot the living present, and was oblivious, not alone of Hinson's question, but of his very existence.

And Hinson sat silently watching him and waiting. Waiting—but his busy brain was hard at work the while, planning new methods of baffling the keen perception of Kennedy. At last the priest came back from the bygone to the now, and it was with a voice no longer sarcastic, but sad and regretful, he answered Hinson :

“No, James, I will not join you. My day is over. The fire has burnt itself out, and there

is no more fuel left to rekindle it. My youth has slipped from me ere yet I knew the full flavour of it, and gone with it are my confidence, my ambitions, and my illusions. The *cause* is hopeless. Our struggles only serve to hasten our dissolution. Our race is doomed. As the Jews have been dispersed over the face of the earth, so shall be the Irish. It is our fate, we cannot escape it, and those fitful flickerings in the socket only waste the little vitality that yet remains to us. No, James, I will not join you."

He spoke in a tone of deep despondency, and did not notice the smile of superiority playing over Hinson's face. The latter had received an answer more favourable to his wishes than he had anticipated, and now he only dreaded lest Clarke might enter too fully into the details of their organisation.

Hinson wanted to leave with Kennedy barely a hazy idea of his secret designs, and, above all, he wished to keep from the priest's knowledge that the organisation was to come so home to him that even his own flock were destined to rally to it.

"We counted on you for certain, Kennedy," said he, as he smoothed down his beard. "There

will be much disappointment when it is known that you have refused to be one of us. At least, you will do nothing to thwart us. May we be sure of that? You will not betray us?"

A gleam of sudden anger leapt into the priest's eyes and was quickly succeeded by a look of scorn. He half rose from his chair, as if under the influence of some powerful emotion; controlling himself, however, with an effort, he sank back again and then spoke:

"Will you ever learn not to judge of another man's notion of honour by your own?"

The glance that accompanied these words would have aroused a spirit less trained to composure; but Hinson was too diplomatic, too full of the importance of the result he aimed at to allow himself to be chafed. He was too wise to waste his time and his breath in an outbreak of useless temper.

"As quick as ever, Father John," he said calmly. "You know the risk we run; so you can't blame us if we are cautious. We are determined, if possible, to leave it in no man's power to betray us, without his own destruction following in the wake of our betrayal."

Father John's face had grown very dark within the last few minutes, and now he looked



searchingly and suspiciously at Hinson, who hastened to say :

“Of course, I did not mean to offend you——”

“Where is Clarke ? Is he coming here to-night ?” interrupted the priest, in a stiff, distant tone.

“He will be here by-and-by,” said Hinson quietly.

“Does he intend making any length of stay in this neighbourhood ?”

“I cannot exactly say,” was Hinson’s answer. “As far as I am myself concerned, I can only remain a couple of days now, but I expect to return, and pay you a longer visit on my way back from the south. You will not be surprised,” here he hesitated, and peered between half-shut eyes at Father John, “if I keep indoors by daylight. The old warrant is still out against me.”

“The old warrant !” repeated the priest ; “surely, James, you can’t be afraid of that. The whole affair has blown over long ago. Who would trouble to have you arrested now ?”

Hinson made no reply, and Kennedy bowed his head and relapsed into thought.

When he looked up again, he said :

“James, you will not tamper with my people?”

Hinson almost started at this abrupt question, but his natural habit of self-control soon came to his aid.

“Your people!” he exclaimed, with a feigned air of surprise.

“Yes, *my* people,” said the priest deliberately. “Promise me not to interfere with anyone belonging to Lusmore. Beyond the bounds of this valley I care not what you, or those who are working with you, may do; but, much as I may be misunderstood, I will not have my flock disturbed in their present peaceful, contented state. Promise me that you will not tamper with them whilst here.”

Hinson faltered before answering. He had come to the valley of Lusmore with the intention of making it one of his chief seats of action, and was not willing to forego his purpose now through a scruple of conscience.

However, this question was not fated to be answered just yet; for at this critical moment their conversation was broken in upon by a hasty tap at the parlour-door. Hinson crouched back with a movement of apprehension, and then whispered cautiously:

“Kennedy, do not forget my name is Mr. James.”

The priest rose, and called out :

“Who is there ? Why don’t you come in ?”

The door was pushed open half-way, and the shock head of Sall-o’-the-Wig protruded.

“If ye plase, Father John, I want to spake to ye just a minit.”

“Come in, Sally, come in,” said the priest.

Sall entered the room, and at the same time there came a most savoury odour from the regions of the kitchen. Putting one open red hand up to the side of her mouth to act as a screen between herself and the strange gentleman, she said in a sort of guttural whisper :

“Av ye plase, Father John, Miss Bride afore she went out towld me to kill a couple o’ chickens an’ roast them. Sure if the gintlemen be English they’ll be wantin’ some mate afore they go to bed, the poor, wake crathurs.”

The last words were uttered in a tone of the direst contempt, as if in Sall-o’-the-Wig’s opinion anyone who required meat more than once a day to keep up his strength must necessarily be a very feeble specimen of humanity.

“James,” asked Kennedy, “will you have some supper ?”

"I have tasted nothing since early morning," said Hinson, who had been staring in surprise at the comical figure of Sall. "Still," he continued, "I would prefer waiting for Clarke. He must feel much more exhausted than I do for the want of food."

"Very well," said Father John; then turning to Sally he asked: "Has Miss Killeen returned yet from the Rectory?"

"No, yer reverence, Miss Bride ain't back yet. She towld me she would call at two or three farmhouses to ax thim to send some men to help us with the hay-makin'."

"Very well, Sally, you can send the supper in when I ring."

At these words the woman left the room.

"What an irrepressible, weird-looking hand-maid you have got!" remarked Hinson, after her departure.

"Sally is no servant of mine. She is a faithful, devoted friend, and anything she does about my household she does simply through kindness and affection."

"A friend of yours!" said Hinson, with an incredulous smile. "That outlandish peasant woman a friend of yours, Kennedy—a friend of yours! Impossible!"

"Nevertheless, it is a fact," said the priest coldly, "and I prize her friendship very much. Besides," he added, "she amuses me."

Hinson, with his usual astuteness, guessed there must be some occult reason for such a friendship. Kennedy had been noted all his life for the haughty way he kept aloof people not likely to understand him—and now there surely must be a strong reason to account for his styling this uncouth woman his friend. Would it be worth while trying to ferret out the why and the wherefore?

Hinson decided not, at least just at present, he had more serious affairs to look after.

"Clarke told me you had no visitors," he said, addressing the priest.

"Nor have I."

"The—the woman spoke of a Miss Killeen."

"My niece, who has been with me for the last ten years."

"Your niece, Kennedy?—then she must have come to live with you since you left the county Clare."

At the mention of the word "Clare" a shadow fell across the priest's brow, and he shuddered as if struck by a sudden chill.

"Clare, Clare," he muttered in a hollow tone, "who speaks to me now of Clare?"

Recovering himself instantly, he said, in his ordinary voice:

"You have never seen Bride, James. The dear child is such a comfort to me."

"I saw a remarkably handsome, dark-haired girl," said Hinson, "pass along the high-road after sunset, accompanied by a young man and a clergyman. Could the girl have been your niece?"

"Yes; you must have met Bride going to the Rectory with Adam Glover."

"What a splendid figure she has! It put me in mind of that of Rosal——"

"Hush!" interrupted the priest, in a warning whisper, glancing round to see there were no listeners. "Hush! you must never mention *her* name here."

Hinson looked at him in perplexed surprise, and drew his fingers slowly through his long, light beard as if the action would help him to find out the reason why he was not to mention *her* name. "Miss Killeen must prove a great attraction to your house," he remarked after a short interval of silence.

"Bride is a good girl," said Father John

gently. "But, James, I will not suffer any love-making, or nonsense of that kind. The dear child's simple mind must not be upset by any of your clever wiles."

"The dear child's simple mind is more likely to be upset by the dark eyes of the young man I saw her walking with," said Hinson.

"Glover's nephew!" said Father John. "The children are both young, and have no guile in their harmless friendship."

Hinson smiled to himself, but made no remark. Suddenly his attention was attracted from outside. Turning his head in the direction of the window and raising his hand in cup fashion to his ear, he listened.

"Kennedy," said he, "I hear approaching footsteps."

"Why, James," said the priest, "your ear is like an Indian's on the war-path. I hear nothing at all."

"If you had been hunted for months like a wild beast through the country, it would soon have sharpened your hearing," remarked Hinson, still holding his hand to his ear in the same attitude of listening. "There are three persons coming in this direction," he continued—"two men and a woman. The woman I take to be a

lady and young, for she walks lightly. The men are not labourers, but gentlemen, and lightly shod, for their steps are springy."

"If you are correct in your surmises, you are very astute," said Father John, in a tone of admiration. "I hear not the faintest sound as yet."

Hinson took his hand from his ear and resumed his former position.

"Kennedy, you will not forget that those newcomers are to know me as Mister James."

"Do not alarm yourself," said the priest, "I shall not forget. Besides, it is probably my niece with some of her friends whose steps your sharp ear has distinguished."

"Clarke may be with her, then," said Hinson. "Are you not afraid," he added, with a mocking smile, "of his upsetting Miss Killeen's mind by his admiration?"

"Clarke has a wife and children," said Father John coldly, "whom he loves dearly."

"Oh!" ejaculated Hinson, with a long-drawn intonation; "as for that," he continued in a significant tone, "he would not be the only one of our acquaintance capable of admiring a fine woman."

Immediately those words were uttered Hinson



would have given anything to recall them, for even his cold nature was startled by the effect they produced.

The proud priest winced as if stabbed to the very heart, his eyes gleamed ominously, and for an instant he looked as if he could hurl the ponderous volume he had been reading at Hinson's head. With a convulsive strain, he held his passionate spirit in leash.

His thin lips were compressed tightly, the hand clutching the book-stand trembled, and his face turned ashen gray.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PEEPING PAT.

THE sound of voices in lively conversation came nearer and nearer.

Father Kennedy rose from his seat with a profound sigh, and, passing his hand once or twice across his brow, as if to chase away all traces of recent emotion, went out.

He walked along the gravel path in front of the house until he reached the angle of the garden wall, which obstructed the view of that part of the avenue leading to the entrance-gate. Here he saw approach Bride Killeen, accompanied by two men. As soon as the young girl caught sight of the gaunt form of the priest in the moonlight, she left her companions and ran towards him.

“Uncle,” said she, “I have been to the

Mount Farm, and Ned Delaney can send us men enough to mow the hill-meadow to-morrow." Then she added in a lower tone: "Your friend, Mr. Clarke, came in while Gerald and I were there, and he introduced himself to us, and I like him very much; but I thought it strange that I couldn't remember your ever mentioning his name to us."

"Have I not?" said he abstractedly.

She looked up at him, and as she noticed the strange grayness of his countenance she shivered as if struck by some sudden chill. What made him so ghastly? Could it only be the effect of the moonlight, or was it—— Oh, no! not that again now.

"Uncle," said she, and her voice almost dropped to a whisper as she spoke, "has anything happened to——"

"Nothing, child, nothing," he interrupted hastily. Then, as if to evade the girl's anxious scrutiny, he advanced towards the two men.

"Well, Father John," said Clarke, "you see I have made two new friends already."

"William," was the smiling reply, "you have the double merit of keeping your old friends while making new ones."

"Are you alone?"

"No, James has been here some time."

Moore, who had modestly retired to the background, now approached and addressed the priest.

"Sir, as I have seen Miss Killeen safely home, I shall wish you 'good-night.'"

"Nonsense, Gerald, don't run away. Come in and have supper. Sally is roasting some fowl, Bride will dress us a salad, and I will treat you to wine fit for an emperor. Come, boy," he added heartily, as he saw Gerald hesitate, "never refuse such a good offer."

Gerald still held back as he glanced towards Clarke.

"Sir," said he, "I will see you to-morrow. To-night your guest will claim all your attention. I would only be in the way."

Clarke eagerly put out his hand and grasped that of the young man.

"Come in with us now," said he. "It is my heartfelt desire that you should hear every word I shall say to Father John Kennedy this evening."

Gerald yielded immediately, and both men followed in the wake of Father John, who entered the house. When the priest reached the foot of the spiral staircase, he paused and said :

"Wait a moment for me here. I wish to say something to my niece."

Then he went straight to the kitchen, where he found Bride already busy inspecting the progress of the cooking:

"Keep back, Miss Bride, will ye, or ye'll spile that purty frock ye've on ye."

Sall-o'-the-Wig was standing in front of the fire with her arms akimbo and her red face beady with perspiration, as she gloated on the two fat pullets slowly turning on the spit. Jane was occupied in a corner, rubbing some glasses, and muttering to herself.

"Father John," cried Sall, "look here, did ye evir see a purtier pair of birds? The smell of them makes me a'most wake with the hunger."

"They are very tempting, Sally," said the priest. Turning to his niece, he added: "Bride, I wish you would go and stop a few days with Mrs. Fogarty of Baltore."

"But, uncle," said the girl, surprised, "I cannot possibly go. We are so busy now; besides, the hill-meadow is to be mowed, and everything would go wrong unless I were on the spot to look after things."

"The hill-meadow will have to wait for

another few days, and Sally can remain here and attend to the house in your absence. I wish you to take the jaunting-car after breakfast to-morrow, and Tommy will drive you over to Baltore, where you can stay until I send for you."

"Oh, uncle, and I have engaged such a lot of people to help us to-morrow."

"Never mind. We can send round word to the Mount Farm to-night to put them off for the present. Now, you had better bid Gerald and Mr. Clarke 'good-bye,' as I particularly request you not to show yourself in the parlour again this evening."

The young girl pouted at these words, and the tears almost started to her eyes. She was disappointed at being thus dismissed for the night. Following her uncle into the hall, she shook hands first with Clarke, who had been talking in an animated way to the Rector's nephew, and then she said to Gerald as she extended her hand to him :

"Good-night, Mr. Moore. I am the naughty child, and must go to bed."

The young man held the soft hand offered to him between his own palms for a moment, and then released it with a gentle pressure, and

Bride returned to the kitchen. The girl drew close to Sall-o'-the-Wig, and whispered :

"Sally, did you remark how pale Uncle John was ? I was frightened lest——"

"Whisht, *alanna*, never go aforehand with troubles."

"I am so nervous about going to Mrs. Fogarty's, I am afraid that——"

"Whisht, whisht ! make yer mind aisy asthore. Iv anythin' happens I'll send for ye at wance—at wance."

Jane, who was standing with her back to them, engaged in arranging some plates and dishes on the shelves of the dresser, commenced to mutter about people "colloguin'," and whispering, and having "saycrets." Sally dragged a coarse towel off the roller and, giving a sharp flick with it at the woman's head, shouted out in a rage :

"Saycrets ! ye ugly ould hag, I'll saycret ye iv ye don't mind yer own bisness."

When Father Kennedy entered the parlour, accompanied by Clarke and Moore, he found Hinson still seated in the same position in the embrasure of the window, his head sunk on his chest and his eyes closed as if lost in profound thought.

At the creaking of the door, he opened his eyes lazily and regarded the new-comers with a sleepy air.

“Mr. Moore,” said the priest, waving his hand towards the window, “let me introduce you to Mr. James.” There was a slightly disdainful emphasis on the last word.

Hinson rose, advanced within the circle of the lamplight, bowed, and said in a soft, slow tone :

“I am much pleased to meet you, Mr. Moore, and hope to have many opportunities of improving our acquaintance before I leave this part of the country.”

The strange and subtle music of this voice, falling on his ear now for the first time, produced a pleasurable effect on Gerald Moore. Its lingering cadences were suggestive of such a delicate appreciative interest that he succumbed immediately to its influence, without seeking to analyse whence the charm proceeded.

“There is nothing I would like more,” said Gerald, “but I am afraid we shall not have many chances of cultivating each other. The fact is, I am seriously thinking of leaving Ireland soon.”

“What!” exclaimed Clarke, as he bounded from the sofa, where he had sunk in a posture



of weariness, "leave Ireland! Why leave Ireland?"

"Well, I must make my living," said Gerald, surprised at the impetuous energy of the questioner, "and there will be more scope for my doing so in America than here."

"But——" cried Clarke.

"Tush!" interrupted Hinson, with a warning gesture, and a cautious glance at the priest, who at the moment had his back to them, unlocking his private wine-cupboard—"Tush! the time has not yet come to speak."

Overborne by the cold, calm will of the other, Clarke sank back on the sofa without finishing the sentence he had commenced; but the gleaming of the phosphoric light within his eyes betrayed the inward perturbation of a fiery spirit chafing under repression.

Gerald Moore sat on the edge of a chair, and nervously fluttered the leaves of a book on the table before him. He was at that period of life when a young man is painfully conscious of the possession of legs and arms, and feels the awful necessity of keeping those awkward members out of everybody else's way.

There was a wondrous attraction to him in the society of middle-aged men, who had seen the

world and acted their part in it; and, like a tale of adventure waiting to be unfolded, the presence of Father John's guests stirred in him an expectant curiosity. Who were they? What brought them here? And why did one strive to hinder the other from speaking?

Hinson, on his side, felt interested in the young man as one to be made use of for his own purposes. The expression of Gerald's mouth pleased him, for it gave earnest of reticence and firmness. He was decidedly not a talker, nor would he prove an enthusiast like Clarke. So much the better; the cause which Hinson directed wanted workers, not dreamers.

How strange that his own heart should beat so much quicker and faster, directly he entered this valley. Was it because he felt he was drawing near the only man who could master him?

His task of organising and spreading his movement throughout Ireland had been easy, much easier than he had expected; but now that he stood on the only soil in the country, virgin to his tread, he trembled, and doubted his own powers for the first time. But as the tiger who tastes human blood and pants for it ever after, he longed for a brain-to-brain contest with Kennedy, holding all the toil of mind and body

he had hitherto gone through as naught in comparison with a struggle for supremacy over the sole being in the world who had aroused both his envy and his admiration.

In the meantime, the priest, intent on dispensing hospitality, was inspecting the contents of his wine-cupboard. The cupboard, hollowed deep in the wall, contained rows of bottles, some standing up, and some laid on their sides, some dingy and veiled in musty cobwebs, and others of artistic shape and varied hue, entwisted with wires, and glittering with yellow foil. Among these were pieces of the rarest and most exquisite glass.

From the top shelf, the priest took down a long-necked, transparent bottle, and the wine within it, like a thing of life, sparkled and shimmered as he bore it to the table. Then beside the bottle he placed four slender glasses, with twisted stems. These glasses were ruby-coloured, with gold tracery representing vine leaves and grapes.

"Come, James," said Father John, "draw up to the table. Don't stir, William, you look fatigued. Remain on the sofa. I will pass your glass."

Whilst speaking, he opened the bottle, and

poured out the amber liquid, which foamed and beaded over the lips of the ruby goblets. Raising it in his hand, the priest said :

“Come, my friends, let us pledge each other in the rarest vintage of Hungary. You are welcome, a hundred thousand times welcome to my home. Let me give you a toast. Here’s to Friendship, Books, and Wine.”

Hinson, who had left the embrasure of the window, and had taken a chair at the table, merely touched his glass with his lips.

Clarke drank his wine at a draught, and Gerald Moore gulped down a mouthful and made a wry face. Not used to sparkling wines, the rarest vintage of Hungary tasted to him marvellously like home-made lemonade and sour apples mixed.

Father Kennedy seated himself in his usual place. The generous beverage which he had just imbibed had chased away all shadow from his brow, and he said gaily :

“I wish we had O’Brady here to give us a Bacchanalian stave.”

Clarke raised himself on his elbow from his reclining position, and said :

“When we last met, Kennedy, you did not care for Bacchanalian staves. I remember the song you used to sing then.”

"I used to sing! Why, William, you must be dreaming. I never had a note of music in my voice."

"Was it all a dream about—

"We all have had enough of Love,  
Test now the talisman Hatred?"

The priest leaned back in his chair at this question.

"Oh, the times of our youth, the times of our youth!" he murmured.

Hinson stirred uneasily. As he saw the wild gleam in his colleague's eyes he felt he could stay him no longer, so resigning himself philosophically to the inevitable, he waited.

With a sudden movement Clarke sprang from the sofa, and, holding out his glass to Father John, cried :

"Fill me some wine. I will give you a toast."

The pure, delicious air from the hill-tops came in freely through the open sash and played with soft caress on the brows and hair of the four men. The silvery rays of the moon, commingling with the light from the frosted green-shaded lamp, threw a weird hue over the greater part of the room, casting fantastic lights and shadows on the walls, the pictures, and the furniture. On

the mantelpiece the gemmed hilt of the Cuban dagger emitted sparks of opaline, amethystine, diamond, emerald, and blood-red fire.

As Clarke stood at the table, with his glass extended towards the priest, his small frame seemed all too slight to hold within its fragile confines such a passionate spirit as one caught glimpses of through the curtain of his dark and wildly expressive countenance.

The priest filled his friend's glass as desired, and then Clarke said, in a tone of solemn reverence :

“I drink to Ireland.”

There was a pause, and the other three then rose to their feet and raised their vessels to their lips.

“Amen,” said Father John. “Here's to Ireland. Poor Ireland!”

“Why *poor* Ireland?” cried Clarke, in his excitement crushing the frail ruby wine-glass to atoms beneath the pressure of his fingers, “why *poor* Ireland! Kennedy, do you not know why we have sought you here to-night?”

“I should have thought,” said the priest, as he resumed his seat, “that you would require no stronger motive than that of friendship to attract you to my home. However, James has

hinted to me of some movement you have on hand."

"Has he told you," said Clarke exultingly, "how from north to south, from east to west, in every cabin and in every homestead, in every town and every city, we have——"

"Kennedy will not join us," interposed Hinson quietly, as he raised his eyes off a sheet of paper on which he had been carelessly drawing some lines, "therefore, there is no necessity of troubling him with details; besides, we are not alone."

Gerald Moore, who took the hint, at once grew red, and rising, said:

"I had better go away. Good-night, gentlemen."

"Stay, stay," said Clarke to the young man. "Do not go, I beg of you. I want you to listen to what I shall say."

Gerald hesitated, and glanced towards Hinson. The latter looked at him an instant, and then spoke:

"Sit down again, Mr. Moore; I also wish you to remain." Then, fixing his eyes on his comrade, he remarked: "I have already spoken to Kennedy. He will not join us."

But Clarke at this moment was no longer

in a state to be quieted or controlled. Addressing the priest he exclaimed incredulously :

“Not join us ! Impossible ! Kennedy, we cannot do without you. You will not desert us now ?”

“Be calm, William, be calm,” said the priest.

“Calm !” said Clarke, with a hysterical laugh. “Calm ! What has come to you, my friend ? Well I remember a day, nearly twenty years since, when a man rose in the midst of the multitude, and towering above the masses in the might of his godlike intellect, spoke words every one of which falling, burnt into our hearts like lava and left marks there which time, powerless to efface, has only deepened the more. Quench the fire which you yourself have lit within me, and then tell me to be calm if you will !”

Clarke’s face as he spoke grew livid from excitement, and his eyes glowed like burning coals.

Father John moved back in his chair and fixed his regard, half-lovingly, half-searchingly, on the speaker, as if wondering at the recuperative powers of this ardent nature, whose vivid enthusiasm years and woful experience had been alike ineffectual to deaden.



Hinson appeared completely absorbed in drawing lines on the paper in front of him, and Gerald Moore was an attentive listener and watcher of all that was taking place.

"William," said Father John, after a pause, "what I was in '48 I cannot be now. What was, at the worst, only folly in the enthusiasm and ignorance of youth would be a base crime in the broader knowledge of my more mature years. How can you, at this period of your life, imagine the possibility of an untrained people, without discipline or money, having any chance when pitted against the wealth and resources of England?"

"We will have aid from America," said Clarke, as he returned to his place on the sofa, "from America, where our sons have gone to when driven from their homes. Ay, and where they have nourished a fiercer and deadlier hate of their oppressor."

"Aid from America," said the priest, with a sarcastic laugh. "Well, the best aid America could send would be to pour in her dollars and dimes with a generous hand, and help to raise the country out of its present slough of poverty and dependence. Come, come, William, give up this useless idea of force, and try diplomacy

instead. Why not work to send men into the British Parliament on whom you can thoroughly rely, and who will fight your battle in the Senate? We Irish have proved splendid soldiers on foreign fields, and, I tell you, it is in our blood to be able diplomatists as well."

"The British Senate!" scornfully exclaimed Clarke. "Never! What! to be caricatured and laughed at; to have our most sacred feelings, our sorrows and our wrongs, made the jeer of the passing hour on the floor of St. Stephen's. Never!"

"Well, William, I expected to find you more reasonable. As long as I could gain my purpose I would not care who laughed or jeered."

At this moment Hinson turned his head sideways from them, in an attitude of listening. Then leaping to his feet and shrinking back to the wall, he said, in a low tone of voice:

"I hear someone approaching. I do not wish to be seen. Pull down the blind."

The priest rose and looked out through the window.

He could see nothing but the quiet lawn, with the bower library in the foreground, and the shadows of the dark mountains beyond. To

the left the chapel-yard and chapel lay steeped in repose, and to the right the winding gravel path led round the angle of the white garden wall, but no living being was visible.

The priest drew in his head again, and said :

“The place is deserted. I never have visitors so late as this. But, if you wish the moonlight to be shut out, here goes.” With this, he jerked down the blind impatiently, as if in protest against Hinson’s excessive caution. The latter returned to his seat, but kept his ear on the alert, and his attention directed towards the window. Father John watched him with a smile of amused contempt.

“James,” said he, “if you had drunk more freely of my wine, you would not be so sore afraid of phantoms.”

In the meanwhile, Clarke, full of one idea, and irritated by this trivial interruption, advanced towards Hinson and said passionately :

“In Heaven’s name speak to Kennedy. Your tongue is silver, and may persuade where mine has failed. We want him in our councils. Tell him all our plans and tell him how he owes himself to his country. Speak ! He cannot suspect you of being actuated by either folly or enthusiasm.”

Hinson passed his delicate fingers through his long, fair beard, but made no immediate reply to this appeal. He was too much occupied in regarding the front window. Presently he saw a corner of the blind stealthily lifted and a white face peer in.

"Kennedy," he cried, "there's a man outside."

"A man outside! If I find anyone prying about my place I'll throttle him," said Father John, rising hastily and leaving the room.

As soon as the door closed behind the priest, Hinson addressed Gerald Moore.

"Do not quit Ireland for a while. I will find something for you to do."

"I will be very glad of any manly employment," said Gerald, "for I am most anxious to be independent of my uncle."

"Then," said Hinson, "I will provide you with an employment which will be both manly and independent, if you allow yourself to be led by me. Hush," he added, putting his finger to his lip as he heard the door creak, "not a word to Father Kennedy as yet."

The priest entered the room, carrying some documents in his hands. Flinging the papers on the table, he said :

"It was only my schoolmaster who brought

me some reports. I told him not to be so zealous in the future ; that day, not night, was the time for business."

"What kind of a man is your schoolmaster ?" asked Hinson carelessly.

"He is a low, crawling sneak," blurted out Moore.

"Bravo, Gerald !" said the priest, laughing. "I like your sledge-hammer epithets. I wish you would come out with them oftener, and not keep such a silent tongue in your head."

The young man drew back abashed, and shut his lips very closely.

"Well, James," added Father John, "as to what kind of man our village schoolmaster is, I cannot say that I have any fault to find with him. He is clever, attends to his business, and all that ; but I confess I have an old-fashioned prejudice against a man who never looks you straight in the face. The Rector, our young friend's uncle," pointing to Gerald, "thinks a great deal of Pat Mahon ; but then Adam Glover is so kind-hearted and sympathetic that he would be likely to discover estimable qualities in his Satanic Majesty himself. Come, let us finish this bottle of wine before Sally brings in the supper."

While Father John replenished the glasses, Clarke again approached Hinson, and said: "Speak! He will listen, perhaps, to you."

Hinson glanced at the eager face bent above him, and, fearing lest the impetuous spirit of his colleague might break loose again and reveal too much, he determined to speak himself.

"Kennedy," said he after a pause, "your arguments a little while since against our employing force in our present undertaking would be unanswerable, if the world had stood still since you had last mixed in it. We have been workers and not dreamers; and, buried as you have been in this valley and living in your books, you are scarcely competent to gauge our chances of success."

The eagle eyes of the priest flashed on the speaker, and he laughed in a scornful way, but he vouchsafed no reply. Going towards the bell, he pulled it violently and sharply.

"Kennedy," entreated Clarke from the sofa, "I beseech you to join us."

"William," said the priest decisively, "even if I were certain of your succeeding, there exists a reason which"—here he hesitated, and a spasm of pain crossed his countenance—"there exists a reason which would prevent my joining you

under any circumstances. I am bound here now always—always.” As he ceased he turned his back completely on them, and, resting his elbows on the mantelpiece, buried his face in his hands.

Taking advantage of Kennedy’s eyes being off him, Hinson scribbled something on a scrap of paper and passed it to Gerald Moore. The words on the paper were :

*“ When you leave here to-night wait for me on the road outside the Castle.”*

The young man had scarcely nodded consent when the priest faced his guests once more and spoke :

“ I would seek to deter no man from any project which would ultimately lead to good. Perhaps it may be presumptuous on my part, who have done nothing, to point out to you what I think you should do. Forget my words and let them neither influence nor dishearten you. But, for God’s sake, whatever you resolve, have pity, have pity on the poor unfortunate people ! ”

As he returned towards the table, a sudden thought struck him and he glanced at both men.

“ There is one thing more I wish to say,” he added. “ You know you are welcome here.”

"Yes," said Hinson smiling, "I'm so sure of it that I intend again trespassing on your hospitality in a couple of months, about the end of the harvest."

"You will be welcome to come whenever you like, and to stay as long as you like; but there is one thing I will not brook from either of you—that is, that you try to interfere with anyone in this valley. Beyond our boundaries do what you please. In our little world here, hidden away among the hills, we are happy, and peaceful, and prosperous now, and I insist that you leave us so. Promise me this."

This was the question which Hinson had expected to be repeated, and yet it found him unprepared with an answer. Still, with the priest's piercing eyes on him, he dare not hesitate; he must say something.

"Kennedy," he began; but Sall-o'-the-Wig, entering at this moment with the supper-tray, interrupted the conversation, and gave Hinson time to plan how best to lull Father John's suspicions.



## CHAPTER VII.

### MOTHER AND SON.

IN the clean-sanded parlour of a small, comfortable house, a little apart from the high road, sat Kate Mahon, widowed proprietress of the only hotel in the valley of Lusmore. Hotel! The word may sound pretentious, but then Kate Mahon managed to impress herself in such a decided manner on all who came in contact with her that no one ever thought of disputing by what right she chose to exalt her half-shebeen, half-hostelry, by the title of hotel. She was eminently a woman of individuality. To her other avocations she added that of post-mistress of the village, a position she was well fitted for because of her natural shrewdness, her superior education, and her methodical habits. She was big-boned and energetic, and believed thoroughly

in herself, and, by so doing, succeeded in imposing the same belief on her neighbours. Her features, if large, were clear and well-defined, and though lacking delicacy, were neither vulgar nor plain. By those who admire a muscular style of beauty, Kate Mahon would be decidedly considered a handsome woman.

Descended from a Celtic mother and a Palatine father, her character was a mixture of the peculiarities of both parents. Her mother, house-keeper at Castle Neville in the former proprietor's life-time, had filled her young daughter's brain with stories of Ireland's wrongs and Ireland's grievances from Elizabeth and Cromwell downwards, and those tales had such an effect on the girl's imagination that she would spend hours on the lone hill-tops dreaming that she was an Irish Joan of Arc, predestined to go forth and redeem her country from the hated Saxon yoke. And while the youthful Kate indulged in dreams, she was all unconscious that the major part of the blood, which coursed so fiercely and hotly through her veins, was not Celtic but Saxon, and had come down to her from her ancestor, a Cromwellian soldier.

However, as years went by, the hard necessities of every-day life, and the shrewd practical sense

she inherited from her Palatine father modified her views considerably, so that, while still thirsting for an opportunity to do something for Ireland, she at length managed to settle down and marry much after the same fashion as her more common-place neighbours.

The best parlour of the inn this Sunday was bright from sand and scouring, and brighter still because of the sun, which came in unobstructedly through the shining, unspotted panes of glass of the front window, forming alternate lights and shadows on the folds of the rich black silk robe which clothed the portly figure of Kate Mahon. The woman was not alone, for at a short distance from her, lazily extended across a couple of chairs, lay, or rather sprawled, a young man basking like a lizard in the warm rays that came in through the half-open sash of a side window. He was small and loosely built, but there was resemblance enough between the two to establish the fact that they stood in the relationship of mother and son. Still the likeness was but slight, for whilst the woman's exterior was stamped by the impress of that inflexible will and indomitable tenacity of purpose which were her chief characteristics, her son, on the contrary, bore on his countenance a kind of shifting weak-

ness, besides a chronic simper, which was half-cringing, half-impudent, and in his eyes there was a leering underlook, which irritated by its sneaking familiarity.

"Pat, rouse yourself, and go out this fine day," said the woman, as, clasping her fingers in each other, she let the interlaced hands fall on her snow-white apron.

"Why, mother," he remonstrated, "what to do? It is so hot, and I've been teaching all the week. Besides, I am tired."

"Tired!" exclaimed the woman, with a contemptuous glance at him, as, yawning, he wriggled himself about on the chairs. "Tired! you are just the same stamp as your worthless, profitless, good-for-nothing father, always gaping and dawdling. 'Tired' is a word fit for Mr. Richard Neville, who can go to sleep with the thought that his money is growing for him all the while; but for you and me it is a different thing. 'Tired' is a word we can't afford to make use of; it's a luxury we must live without."

Pat Mahon raised himself to a sitting posture, and, planting his elbows on his knees, rested his chin in his hands, and said in a sulky tone:

"But, mother, goodness knows I work hard enough. What more do you want?"

“What more do I want?” she echoed, with a sarcastic curl of the lip. “Do you think I am content with your being the village school-master? Oh! as far as that goes, you work too hard for what they give you.”

“Besides, you know, mother,” he interposed, with a sudden glow on his face, “I have a chance one day of becoming inspector, and mixing as an equal with gentlemen like Mr. Richard and his friends.”

This was, evidently, the most ambitious dream of Pat Mahon,—to become a gentleman. It was this which first influenced him to devote himself to teaching as being a more genteel occupation, and more likely to advance his views, than that of farming.

“Inspector!” said the woman, with an impatient shrug of the shoulder; “that is a possibility too far off to be counted on now. If it does come in the future, well and good; but I don’t believe in waiting for anything. How are you getting on with Bride Killeen?”

“Why, you see, mother,” said he at length, with a self-sufficient smirk, “there is no great hurry about that matter. It can hang on yet a trifle.”

Kate Mahon frowned angrily at her son. She

bit her lips until they became colourless, and then spoke in a very low voice :

“ You are not going to let that five hundred pounds slip through your hands ? ”

“ But, mother, there is no danger that—— ”

“ No danger ! ” she interrupted scornfully. Then she continued, in the same subdued voice as before : “ You would think otherwise if you were to see her, as I do, every day, walking with the Rector’s nephew. Does that mean no danger ? ”

“ But, mother, Mr. Moore is a Protestant, and Father John would never consent to his niece marrying a Protestant.”

“ Father John will have very little to do with it,” said the woman, in a decided tone. “ Where Bride Killeen takes a fancy to a person she can be depended upon. She will be steadfast to the end.”

“ But, mother—— ”

“ The priest will never make old bones,” interrupted his mother. “ He owns a whole street of houses in Knockbeg, and when he dies Bride Killeen will be his heiress. Even if he lives and she marries without his consent, he cannot prevent her husband having the five hundred pounds her father left her, and which is safely lodged to

her credit in the Provincial Bank. Now, Bride Killeen and her fortune are substantial facts, whereas an inspectorship is only a dream of the future."

"But, mother, where is the hurry?"

"Where is the hurry!" said his mother, as a gleam of anger shot into her eyes. "Have I not told you that she is always about with young Moore?"

"Gerald Moore, indeed!" exclaimed Pat Mahon, with a curl of the lip. "Why, mother, I could cut him out easily, if I chose to exert myself. But," he continued smirkingly, "suppose Bride Killeen does not care for me?"

"Suppose nothing," replied the woman, in a snappish tone. "She *must* like you. Do you think, when once I take a thing into my head, I am going to hang fire before a girl's romantic whim? Care, or care not, Bride Killeen must be brought to marry you. We want her money, and her money we must have. *I* have made up my mind, that ought to be sufficient for *you* and——" Here her eyes gleamed anew, and there burnt within them for an instant such a fiery determination that you felt it would be dangerous to cross this woman in any of her plans. "I will stop at nothing to gain my ends

—nothing,” she repeated, in a lower and more emphatic tone.

Pat Mahon flung himself sulkily back into his former reclining position across the chairs. Like most weak natures, he had his impulses of mulish obstinacy—momentary impulses which led him to resist, or, more correctly speaking, to make a show of resistance before yielding to the imperious dictatorship of the stronger nature of his mother. Now, when he expressed a doubt as to the possibility of Bride Killeen not caring for him, he had not himself the slightest doubt on the matter; for his excessive vanity precluded any serious idea of his ever meeting a rebuff. His vanity, however, craved for outward as well as inward fostering, and it was with this view he had thus spoken, believing his mother would flatteringly reassure him. She, not being of those who harbour such petty ideas, and never resorting to roundabout subterfuge, when she could just as easily go straight ahead, took his words in their literal sense, and so answered them. Baffled in his expectations, he became doggedly ill-humoured, and feeling spiteful towards his mother, because she had not understood him, resumed his original sprawling attitude with the intention of making himself as



disagreeable as he possibly could. The woman looked at him in silence ; she was accustomed to his morose moods, and, though seldom divining the really small motives which were at the bottom of them, she had tact and cleverness enough to manage him quite as well as if she had been cognizant all the while of what was passing through his brain. After a pause, she addressed him in a careless, indifferent tone :

“Pat, go over to the chapel-house and see if Father John will require any more Sauterne. The traveller will call for orders early to-morrow.”

“What’s the use of going on Sunday about the wine ?” he sulkily muttered, without stirring an inch. His mother vouchsafed no reply. Having grumbled for a few moments, at length, as if her stillness even possessed the power of cowing him, he rose reluctantly to his feet.

“When you are there,” she said, as soon as she saw him move, “try and make yourself agreeable to Bride Killeen. Flatter her. All women while they are young believe in flattery, and they don’t dislike it at any age, whether they believe in it or not.”

“But, mother, if Father John suspected I was after his niece he would wring my neck off.”

"I don't at all doubt it," she said, with a short laugh, "but he won't suspect. The priest will never dream that his schoolmaster could have the audacity to think of making Bride Killeen his wife, so you need have no fear on that account."

The woman was right, for Father John Kennedy would have thought it just as likely for a ploughboy to aspire to his niece's hand, as that Pat Mahon should do so.

"Now go," added Kate Mahon, "and don't waste your time."

"Waste my time?"

"Yes," she answered, in a sharp tone, as if she was becoming weary of his slowness. "I don't waste either my time or my words for nothing. If you see me pick a pin off the floor you may be sure I have a purpose in so doing. If I spend an hour gossiping with one of those thick-headed blockheads, or one of their silly wives, it is not idling I am, but working hard—yes, working hard. I couldn't live unless I had something in view. Go and make the best use of your time, for if you hang back much longer it will be all the more difficult to supplant young Moore. Go at once, I say."

Pat Mahon felt half inclined to rebel, for he

was in an unusually indolent humour this warm day, and would fain stay indoors lolling about ; but he knew his mother would never give him a moment's peace until she had her way, so he shuffled reluctantly out of the room.

Presently he returned, and leaning his back against the jamb of the door, he said :

"Mother, who is Rosaleen ?"

"Rosaleen ! I don't know."

"Well, what would you say if I told you that ten days ago there was a woman of that name at the chapel-house ?"

"What should I say but that it was nothing new for visitors, both ladies and gentlemen, to be staying at Father John's at any time, whether ten days or ten months ago ?" was the answer given rather sharply.

The schoolmaster approached a step or two nearer, and a malevolent light spread over his features. Rubbing his hands slowly together, he licked his dry lips once or twice before speaking :

"Mother, I know what the secret of the chapel-house is."

"The secret of the chapel-house !"

"Yes," he went on, with a low chuckle, "the secret of the chapel-house. It is a woman named

Rosaleen, and she comes at night-time, every three or four months, and makes such a row, and they are afraid of their lives anyone should know about her; and they always send at once for Mr. O'Brady, and he quiets her, and gets rid of her. There now, what do you think of that?"

Mahon had always felt the full extent of Father John's contempt for him, and he now exulted in having, as he thought, found out something which might serve to drag the proud priest down to his own level.

His mother looked at him an instant: "You are your father's own son, there can be no doubt of that at any rate," said she at length. "You have the same habit of prying round your neighbours' houses by night, and picking up bits of their talk, and inventing lying scandals about them. You'd better not let any of the farmers hear you say a word against Father John Kennedy, or they'll break every bone in your body. Now, go, and don't come to me again with your lying stories."

"But, mother, it is the real truth. And it was Father John——"

"You leave Father John's affairs alone," she interrupted angrily.

Foiled in his attempt to get his mother to listen to what he had to say, the schoolmaster turned his back on her and left the room in a rage.

He vented his pique, however, by banging the door after him, as if to make some demonstration of authority by creating a noise. Then, muttering to himself, he stamped up the staircase, kicking the steps savagely as he went. The woman smiled as she heard him, and then rising, she approached the chimney-glass and contemplated the reflection it sent back to her. She was straightening out carefully the soft muslin strings of her cap, when she became aware that someone was tapping at the front door. Re-seating herself, she folded her hands on her lap, and waited. Her son, who was busy brushing his hair upstairs, and making a few additions to his toilet, preparatory to going to the chapel-house, heard the tap at the door also, and dropping his hair-brush, descended, and drew back the bolt. William Clarke was standing outside.

"I wish to see the postmistress on a matter of importance," said he to the young man.

"Step inside, if you please, sir," said Pat Mahon. "I will tell my mother." Then, hurry-

ing back to the parlour, he addressed the woman in a whisper :

“Mother, there is a foreign-looking gentleman outside who wants you.”

“Very well. Send him in,” was the answer.

“But, mother, don’t you think I had better remain with you, those foreigners are so treacherous ? he may mean to rob you.”

The woman smiled ; she knew well enough her son wanted to stay, not on account of any fear for her safety, but because he wished to find out the stranger’s reason for calling.

“Send the gentleman in,” she said impatiently, “and go to the chapel-house. What a dawdler you are !”

Presently William Clarke entered the parlour, ushered in by Pat Mahon. At sight of him, Kate Mahon’s face lit up with a look of pleased recognition. Rising from her seat, she said :

“I am very glad to see you, sir. I hope you are quite well ?”

“Thank you, madam,” said Clarke, regarding her with a bewildered air. He wondered where he could have met this woman before, there was something so familiar in her face and voice. He could not recollect at the moment ; it must have been somewhere long ago. “Madam,” he con-

tinued, "pray excuse my disturbing you on Sunday. I would not do so, were it not that I must speak to you about something very particular. Can we be alone?" This was meant for her son, who was listening eagerly to what was being said.

"Pat, go to Father John's about the wine at once, and be sure and draw the door well after you."

Pat Mahon, pretending to obey, first closed the parlour door after him, and then opening the front door, banged it again with a loud noise. However, he did not go out himself; he had no intention of so doing; he meant to listen and ascertain what was the stranger's business with his mother. In the hall, at the right-hand side, was a door leading to the shop. Pat Mahon turned the handle of this door noiselessly, and passed in. The shop was in complete darkness, for being Sunday the shutters had not been taken down. There were three doors in the shop, the large one leading to the road, which was now heavily barred from inside; the small one from the hall, and another opening into the parlour. The postmistress's son carefully groped his way in the darkness; he was in terror lest by knocking inadvertently against bottles or glasses the

jingling might betray his presence. Cautiously, step by step, he advanced, feeling softly with his hands stretched out in front of him; now he would touch a barrel, and again he would recoil as his fingers came in contact with cold pewter pots. How if he stumbled against one of the shelves and brought all its contents down with a clatter? The schoolmaster shivered at the thought. At last he reached a large cask of Guinness's porter, set up on one side of the door between the shop and the parlour. He heard the murmur of voices from within, and, ensconcing himself behind the cask, he held in his breath and used all his endeavours to hear what was passing.

At the sound of the banging of the front door, William Clarke put his hand in his pocket, and drawing out a letter handed it to the post-mistress.

"This letter has been opened in your office, and fastened up again before reaching me. Look at it yourself."

Kate Mahon's hand shook as she took the epistle and looked at the envelope. Then she returned it, and said in a distressed tone:

"Sir, I cannot deny that your letter has been somehow tampered with; but I assure you, on my word of honour, I would be just as soon



capable of picking your pocket as of reading your letter."

"But someone has opened it, you must admit," he said.

"No one has access to the letter-box but myself and—and my son." Here Kate Mahon stopped an instant; she was filled with shame to think her son could be capable of such an unprincipled act. "Believe me, sir," she continued in an humble tone, "I have not touched your letter. I am sorry to say that I am afraid my own son must have been the guilty party. What will you do?"

"Luckily," said Clarke, "my letter, which was of very great importance, was written in cipher, and, therefore, if your son did open it, he could not read it."

"What will you do? Will you take any further steps about it?" said the woman. Her voice was quiet; but her heart was full of anguish.

"I suppose your son is aware that he can be punished for opening another person's letter. If you promise that you, yourself, will take special care of any letters that may come for me in the future, I will not proceed against him this time."

"I promise; I promise most faithfully," she

said. "I will not let a hand touch them but my own, and directly they arrive I will bring them myself to you, to Father John Kennedy's house."

"No, no," he said hurriedly; "do not bring them yourself; that would only excite suspicion. I would prefer calling."

"As you like. You have forgotten me, Mr. Clarke; but there was a time when you did trust me."

"Forgotten you!" said Clarke, with amazement. He had risen and taken up his hat; but, on hearing these words, he turned sharply and looked at Kate Mahon.

"There is something strangely familiar to me in your voice and appearance; yet I cannot bring to mind where I have seen you before. It cannot have been in this neighbourhood. This is my first visit to the valley of Lusmore."

The woman smiled gently; her voice grew so wonderfully soft, under the influence of some thought, that she seemed years younger.

"It is nearly twenty years ago since I last saw you, and then it was in Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin."

"I remember—I remember now!" exclaimed Clarke; as, springing forward, he pressed her

hands tightly in his, and gazed eagerly into her face. She smiled once more, and again there spread over her features the softness of a renewed youthfulness. "I know you now," he cried, his eyes shining the while. "How could I have forgotten you? Well I remember that night in Fitzwilliam Square, when you risked both reputation and liberty to save me, a stranger, from the bloodhounds who were hot-foot after me. Oh! most generous of women; how could I forget you!"

"Sir," said she, blushing as bashfully as a young girl, "you make too much of the little I was able to do for you that night."

"Too much!" he cried. "Oh, no; rather say not half enough. How I ran that night! But I was not running to save my own worthless life. I had papers about me compromising my comrades, and as I ran my brain whirled with the maddening thought that, were I caught with those papers on me, many better men than I would be ruined. Well do I remember meeting you alone in the square. I was worn out and exhausted. I stretched my hands to you, and implored of you, if you had the heart of a woman, to give me shelter from my pursuers. Not an instant did you hesitate, but drew me within the

door of the house where you were staying, and secreted me till daybreak. Oh, most generous of creatures, you had heart enough not alone for one woman, but a thousand. How could I ever forget you?"

"Do not speak of it any more," said she gently. "That was a time of excitement and noble deeds; now we are either too selfish or too mercenary to risk anything for the good of our country."

"Hush," said Clarke, in a stifled tone, as he went to the side-window and shut down the sash. "I could tell you something which would make you think differently. But there may be listeners."

"We are alone in the house," said the woman.

"Then," said Clarke, in a cautious whisper, "I tell you there is something going on now in the country far superior in every way to that last poor plan of ours. I know we can trust you, and you may be useful to us."

"Oh," she answered, her face blushing, "try me. I would give my life for the cause."

"Hush," said he, "not so loud. We may be overheard. I cannot explain more now. I must ask the master's leave."

"The master!" said she in surprise. "Are you not the master, Mr. Clarke?"

"No, no; the master has far more intellect than I. Oh!" he continued enthusiastically, "I am only an honest, ordinary man, who loves his country; but the master is a genius, a man of infinite resources, and of marvellous perseverance. He——"

At this moment Clarke heard the sound of suppressed breathing close to him.

"Madam," he cried, in a loud, sharp tone, "there is someone behind that door, listening."

"Impossible," said Kate Mahon; "that leads to the shop, which has been shut up since last night. Perhaps you may have heard the cat. Puss—puss," she called, as, turning the handle of the door, she opened it, but no puss responded to the call.

"I am certain," said Clarke, more emphatically, "there is someone hidden there."

"You must be mistaken. There is a sack of oatmeal in one corner, and you may have heard the mice trying to get at it. However, to satisfy you, I will fetch a light and we can search."

The woman struck a light, and lit one of the candles on the mantelpiece. As she was in the act of doing so, a sudden suspicion

seized her, and she trembled all over. Holding the candle in one hand, and pressing the other tightly over the region of her heart, she approached Clarke, and said :

“If—if there be anyone hidden there, believe me I—I know nothing of it.”

“I am thoroughly convinced of that. Now, let us see who it is.”

Still trembling, Kate Mahon preceded Clarke, and held the candle high up so as to throw as much light as possible on the darkness of the shop. Several casks and barrels stood around in regular order in the foreground, but the light was too dim to illumine the obscure corners beyond.

“Keep near the door,” said Clarke, “and I will search all about.”

The woman, no longer trembling, stood like a statue. Her lips were colourless, and the unoccupied hand now hanging by her side was tightly clenched, so that the nails almost penetrated the palm.

When Pat Mahon had ensconced himself behind the cask of porter, he found he could scarcely catch a word here and there of the dialogue going on in his mother’s parlour. At last, his curiosity overcoming his discretion, he

drew near the door, and put his ear to the key-hole. The few phrases the schoolmaster now contrived to hear only stimulated his hankering to know more; but at the very moment Clarke was speaking of the "master," Pat Mahon was seized by a fit of wheezing on the chest, preliminary to a cough, which betrayed his presence. He was subject to occasional attacks of bronchial weakness, and, to his confusion, the cool air of the shop brought on one now. Crawling back hurriedly, he hid himself again behind the cask of porter. His heart quailed within him when his mother and Clarke entered the shop. Knowing his hiding-place must soon be discovered, he revolved several plans as to what he should do or say when caught. At last he decided on feigning drunkenness. Lying flat on his face, he commenced to snore loudly. Clarke, attracted by the sound, approached the cask and stooped over the prostrate form of the schoolmaster.

"It is a drunken man. Get up. Who are you, and what brings you here?" said he, as he tried to push over the recumbent body with his foot, but the only answer he received was a louder and more prolonged snore. Then Clarke made an effort to lift the schoolmaster by the

arms ; but as soon as he had managed to raise him half-way, his unwilling burden slipped from his grasp and threw himself flat on his face and hands.

“Mr. Clarke,” said Kate Mahon, who had been looking silently on, “please hold the candle a moment.”

The woman left the shop, but returned shortly, carrying a large pail of water, with which she douched the prostrate form of her son. As soon as Pat felt the cold water, he leaped to his feet, and cried out savagely :

“Do you mean to drown me, mother ? There, now, you’ve gone and spoilt my best suit of clothes.”

“Oh, you sneaking hound ! oh, you sneaking hound !” said his mother, in bitter accents. “Look,” she added, addressing Clarke, “this is my son—*my* son, who opens letters and listens at keyholes.”

“I pity you,” said Clarke, “I pity you from the depths of my heart. Your son is not worthy to have such a mother. Let us get back to the other room. Come,” he added to the schoolmaster, “and give an account of yourself.”

Pat Mahon looked a pitiful figure in his wet clothes, as he came shrinking into the parlour after his mother and her visitor.



"Young man," said Clarke sternly, "if you go on like this you will come to a bad end."

"Oh, no," cried the woman, with an unnatural laugh, "he will never come to a bad end. It is only in goody-goody story-books that sneaks and cowards are overtaken by the fate they deserve; in real life they always contrive to get on very well. Leave the house," she said, stamping her foot at her son, "and don't let me see your face again to-day!"

Pat Mahon raised his eyes defiantly to his mother's for a moment, and made a weak attempt at a giggle, but soon cowering before her, he slouched out of the room without uttering a word.

"I am extremely sorry for you," said Clarke, as soon as the schoolmaster had disappeared. "Do you think," he continued, in an uneasy tone, "your son could have overheard much of our conversation?"

"I am certain he could not," she replied, "you spoke in a very subdued voice."

"I should never forgive myself if, through any want of caution on my part, the slightest inkling of our enterprise should get abroad. It would mean utter ruin and disaster. I know I can trust you, and you might be most useful to

us, so don't be surprised if the master should pay you a visit."

"How am I to know him?" she asked.

Clarke smiled before replying, "I cannot say what guise or disguise he may choose to appear in. For the present I will say good-bye, as Father John Kennedy will be waiting dinner for me."

"It is nearly three o'clock," she remarked, "and that is Father John's dinner-hour."

Kate Mahon escorted her visitor to the front door, and remained some minutes looking after his retreating figure. Her thoughts were full of a horrid discord of grief, wrath, and vexation, and she felt at the moment as if she almost hated her own son. Adam Glover, who was passing by her house, followed by a troop of chattering urchins, caught sight of the pained expression on the woman's countenance, and stopped to speak to her.

"Are you not well, Mrs. Mahon?" asked the Rector.

"I am quite well, thank you," was the reply.

"How is your son, Pat? All right, I hope."

"Yes, sir."

"His schools are a credit to him. Your son is a most estimable young man, and a very great favourite of mine."

"Yes," said the woman, in a dazed way.

"Ah! Mrs. Mahon," said the Rector, "you are very lucky in having such a good son. I have just been visiting poor Mrs. Daly. Mike is such a trouble to her; the wild young fellow has got mixed in some faction fight, and his poor mother's heart is breaking lest he might be sent to prison. Your son has always been so very steady."

"Yes," she said, gazing with an abstracted air at the face of Adam Glover.

"You must be proud of your son, Mrs. Mahon."

"Yes." The monosyllable was repeated mechanically.

"I am sure you are not well to-day," said the Rector, his mild, fresh countenance beaming with a kindly interest as he noticed the drawn look about the woman's mouth. "You ought to get someone to help you in the house and shop. You really do seem ill."

"I am quite well."

"You don't look so. Good-day, Mrs. Mahon."

"Good-day, sir."

There was a strange expression—half of agony, half of wildness—in the woman's face, as she watched the Rector go along the road, followed by his escort of village children, some of them

being even bold enough to clutch his coat-tails. When the winding of the road hid Adam Glover completely from her view, Kate Mahon closed her front door and, returning to the parlour, bolted herself in.

“Proud of my son! Oh God! Proud of my son!” she cried. Then, flinging herself into a chair, she burst into a hysterical fit of sobbing.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MAKING HAY.

THEY had been busy all day, mowing the hay in the Reverend John Kennedy's hill-meadow. Though already late in the afternoon, the sun blazed fiercely, and the tired mowers wiped the heavy perspiration from their foreheads, and gladly accepted cool draughts of fresh butter-milk from the hands of Bride Killeen. Sall-o'-the-Wig, her red face glowing with fun and exercise, was taunting the labourers for being so slow in their movements. Scythe in hand, she cut through the hay with such clean, swift sweeps that her dexterity put to the blush some of the deftest of the male mowers. Father John was strolling restlessly to and fro through the field, breviary in hand, occasionally reading snatches of his book, or chatting at intervals

with Emily Neville, who was seated on a grassy mound beneath an old spreading oak, which rose on an incline a little way above where the men were at work. From this coign of vantage there was an extensive view of the surrounding country.

"Emily," said Father John, as he stood a moment by the young girl, "have you come here, as before, merely to tease and tantalise us for a few days, or are we likely this time to get a more permanent hold on you?"

"In plain English that means, if I am going to marry Cousin Richard and settle down to humdrum matrimony for the rest of my life."

"I don't believe you could settle down to anything, Emily."

"I believe you are so far right," she said, laughing. "However, I suppose in the end I will have to take refuge in marriage, were it only to shun the odium of old-maidenism. Heigho!" she added, with a weary little sigh, "I think people take a great deal too much interest in the matrimonial well-being of us poor womankind. I wish they would leave us alone. Tell me, Father John," she continued, in a significant tone, "would *you* recommend me to marry Richard?"

He hesitated before answering, and then said, carelessly :

“You might do worse.”

“Ay, ay, that’s it,” said the young girl impatiently, “I might do worse, and I might do better, and it doesn’t matter a pin what I do after all. Well,” she continued in a piqued tone, “though you are so cautious about giving your opinion, I will be candid enough to tell you that my becoming mistress of Castle Neville depends entirely on a chance mood. If Richard asked me to make up my mind to-day I would say ‘no ;’ to-morrow—perhaps—I would say ‘yes,’ and once my word passed, I would keep to it.”

“Then decidedly I would not recommend you to accept Richard,” said the priest.

“Nonsense !” she said, with a gay laugh. “Why not Richard as well as anyone else ? Besides, if I am miserable I can drown myself in the lake or hang myself up with my garter. There now, Father John,” she said in a coaxing tone, “don’t make me cross. Tell that handsome young man with the big eyes, the Rector’s nephew, to come here. I want to flirt a little with him for a change. You have made me so horribly mopish, I want something to enliven me.”

"I don't think I'll allow you to flirt with Gerald Moore. It might be too dangerous a game to play at."

"Dangerous! for which of us—for him or for me?" asked the young girl slyly. "Go, Father John, there's a dear, tell him to come to me."

The priest smiled as he turned away and went slowly in the direction of the mowers. One of the labourers, a sturdy middle-aged peasant, was grumbling very much. He was wroth at being dictated to by a woman. Sall-o'-the-Wig teach him to mow, indeed!

"Stir yerself, Tim Gleeson," said Sally, "stir yerself. The meadow won't be finished afore dark if ye go a-mowin' in that lazy way."

"Trust me, Sally, trust me," answered the man, as he let his scythe drop carelessly, "there's plenty of time, an' slow an' sure, slow an' sure, wins the day." Here he winked at his comrades.

"Faix, ye're slow enough, Tim," said Sally, "bud as for bein' sure, ye won't get me to believe that of ye this side of Michaelmas at any rate."

The man laughed, and turning his back to the woman, resumed a conversation with a fellow-labourer, which had been broken into previously by Sall-o'-the-Wig's urging them to keep to their work.



"An it's the thruth I tell ye, Shaun," said the man called Tim, "I saw him meself wid me own two eyes in beyant Father John's gate."

"Are ye sure it was he?" was the eager question.

"To be sure I am, as certain as my name is Tim Gleeson. I saw Hinson crossin' Father John's lawn."

The man suddenly felt his shoulder grasped as if in a vice. Looking up, he saw Father John, and he quailed nervously before the stern face.

"Spy!" hissed the priest. "How dare you come sneaking about my premises?"

"Oh, your reverence, your reverence. I didn't mane it," said the man in a whining tone.

Father John flung the man from his path.

Gleeson slowly picked himself up, muttering in a low tone.

"Not a word—not a word," cried Father John, almost beside himself with rage.

Tim Gleeson took hold of his scythe and commenced to work away furiously, as if he would satisfy his temper on the hay as he dared not show it elsewhere. Sall-o'-the-Wig chuckled audibly, and redoubled her efforts to outvie the men.

"Miss Bride," said Sally, as, panting from her

exertions, she stopped an instant to push the wild hair out of her eyes. "Will ye sthrike up the mowin' song, av ye plaze, miss?"

"Wait, Sally, till I empty my can. Here, Jane, fill some noggins and hand them round to the men and women."

When Bride Killeen had distributed all the buttermilk she stood apart a moment. She looked at the mountain and at the sky, at the surrounding landscape and back again to the mowers. A soft smile spread gradually over her countenance, and a tender light beamed within her eyes. Then gently swaying her body to and fro, and swinging the empty can in keeping with the rhythm of the tune, she sang in a rich, clear voice a rustic song all about the hay and hayfields, and love that was constant and true. The refrain was caught up and repeated by the workers throughout the meadow, and the sweep of the men's scythes cutting through the grass made a whishing accompaniment to the sound of their voices. Gerald Moore and William Clarke, who had been engaged in private conversation at the furthest end of the field, now approached, and both men stood admiring the young girl as she sang.

"Miss Killeen," said Clarke, when the last

refrain was ended, "your song is like yourself, sweet and wholesome."

"Ah, Mr. Clarke," said she, with a smile and a blush, "we are not used to compliments in Lusmore. Mr. Moore," she said, raising her dark blue eyes to the Rector's nephew, "Miss Neville wishes to speak to you. She sent Uncle John to call you. Will you come to her?"

"Miss Killeen, may I come too?" asked Clarke. "The little lady looks lonely in her solitary state under the tree."

The trio approached Emily Neville. She was very pretty as she sat on the mound beneath the oak, her small, classic-shaped head covered over with its tiny golden curls, her large turquoise-blue eyes, limpid as those of an infant, and her delicate features, now that they were in repose, looking as perfect as those of a Greek statue.

"Bride," she said, with a charming pout, "how unkind of you to leave me here all alone."

"Why didn't you come to us, Emily?" was the answer.

"Yes, Miss Neville," said Clarke, "you should have come nearer the mowers, and drank some of Miss Killeen's delicious buttermilk and joined in her song."

"I didn't want to get sunburnt; my face catches the sun so. Now, Mr. Clarke, where is your friend, Mr. James, to-day?"

"He has left Lusmore for the present."

"I am sorry. I did mean to have a bit of fun out of him if he remained much longer at the chapel-house," she remarked, with a mischievous laugh. "He was so vexed when I asked him why he got himself up so like the busts of Shakespeare."

"I did not see much of Mr. James," said Bride Killeen. "I was away at Mrs. Fogarty's nearly the whole time he was with Uncle John. Will he come back again, Mr. Clarke?"

"Most probably," said Clarke, as he glanced in a meaning manner at Gerald Moore.

"William, William, come here; I want you," called out Father John.

Clarke joined the priest, who was strolling up and down.

"Mr. Moore," said Emily Neville, "come closer. You must amuse me for half-an-hour or so."

The young man did not move an inch in spite of this appeal.

"Miss Neville," he answered coldly, "I'm afraid, so far as I am concerned, you must lack your amusement."

She laughed merrily, and then commenced to scan the young man's person in a provokingly quizzical manner.

"So we don't feel inclined to afford amusement to Miss Neville! Our dignity would be offended. We only do the tragical parts; the comic is not in our line. Oh, no! we scorn such foolish frivolity! I wonder your mightiness can descend from your pedestal to talk to a silly woman. Dear me, I'm sure I feel highly flattered. Sorry I'm so indolent, or I would get down and make you a curtsey country fashion."

"Miss Neville," began Gerald, with a confused air.

"Come, come, sir," she interrupted imperiously. "No more rebellious speeches. You must and you *shall* amuse me. Down on your knees this moment and beg my pardon. Down with you. I will soon put an end to your tragedy airs."

Again she laughed gaily, her face all sparkling over with dimples, her eyes twinkling with mischief.

Gerald Moore grew very red and inclined to say something very stiff, but there was no resisting this lively creature; so yielding in spite of

his judgment to the charm she cast upon him, he smiled gently at her as she spoke again :

“You must know,” she said, playfully threatening him with her upraised finger, “I have always had my own way, and mean to have it as much here as anywhere else. So capitulate and beg for mercy, for I warn you I am no despicable enemy.”

Gerald looked down at this dainty morsel of humanity, shaking her finger at him with such a mock air of authority. Like all men possessed of great physical strength, he was drawn to give more than a due amount of admiration to this fragile creature who seemed only fit to be covered with a glass shade, and placed on the mantelpiece as an ornament.

He wondered if he touched her would she fall to pieces. At this moment she smiled up at him ardently, and he found this smile so irresistible that with a sudden impulse he flung himself on the grass at her feet and said :

“Are you satisfied now ?”

“You are more pliant than I imagined,” she said laughingly.

Bride Killeen stood apart and unnoticed. Once Emily Neville commenced to speak she had the gift of monopolising the attention of her

listener, so that for the moment Gerald Moore forgot the presence of Bride. Bride walked slowly away, and sitting down on a heap of hay took a book out of her pocket and laid it open on her lap. In vain she tried to read; the words danced before her eyes. She felt strangely depressed. All day she had been so happy and so satisfied with everything and everybody; but now the air even seemed too oppressive and the scent of the new-mown hay sickened her. She glanced towards the pair under the oak-tree. They were chatting away gaily, and Bride, as she watched them, felt miserable. How familiar Gerald Moore has grown all at once with Emily Neville! He laughs at her, contradicts her, nay, even goes so far as to lay his hand lightly on her delicate fingers. No later than yesterday, Gerald had scoffed at Bride's admiration of Emily Neville, had sneeringly classed her as "a nice young lady." To-day he is at Emily's feet, gazing up into her face, with a look which is very far removed from either indifference or contempt.

"What is your book, Bride?" asked Father John, who was passing by at this moment.

Silently she handed the volume to her uncle. He fluttered the leaves an instant, but it was

not the contents of the book which occupied him. He was more interested in the perusal of the young girl's countenance.

"Silly child," he said at length, in a soft, low tone, as his hand lingered tenderly on her hot brow. Then giving her back the book, he turned in the direction of Emily Neville.

"Come here," said Emily to him, "I am about confessing myself to Mr. Moore. He is curious to know if I am more or less than I appear to be. The confidences of a young lady of the nineteenth century! What a sensational novel it would make, if one amongst us was candid enough, or silly enough, or daring enough to reveal her real thoughts of the world in which she lives."

"Why don't you attempt such a task yourself, Emily?" said Father John.

"I!" she exclaimed, with an air of dismay. "Do you believe it would be possible for me to bear up against the terrific storm which such a revelation would cause to burst over my poor head? Poor weak me! Bah! I am the veriest coward in the world, and dared I say half of what I really think, my friends would bury me under a load of indignation. Come now," she continued, with a light laugh, "I am about to



tell you something. Father John, are you ready?"

"I am all ears," he replied, as he leaned against the tree beneath which the young girl was seated.

"How am I to commence?" she said, with a charming air of penitence. "Well, here goes for number one. I am totally devoid of any firmness of character. I am as feeble and as vapid as you please, and it is all the fault of—of——"

Here she hesitated, looked down, pouted her full lips; then raising her eyes again she directed them towards Gerald Moore, in a piteous, imploring way, as if she wanted him to help her on.

"The fault of what?" asked the young man, ever so softly.

"Of my physique, of course," she answered mockingly; "of my insipid pink-and-white face and my pale blonde hair. Ah! if I only happened to be dark, instead of fair, I would be just as strong-minded as any Lady Macbeth. How can I help being a weak, everyday individual? It is my complexion which causes it all."

Father John laughed heartily at the tone of ruefulness with which Emily bewailed the disadvantages of her style of beauty.

"You accuse fate instead of yourself," said the priest. "Your sorrow is not sincere. Begin again."

"No, I won't," she answered petulantly. "Once a failure always a failure, with me."

"Very well," said Father John. "I am going to discharge the mowers, so you can resume your *tête-à-tête* with Gerald."

The priest left the young people alone, but first he looked round in search of Bride.

The young girl had disappeared. Her mind full of bitterness and pain, she had stolen quietly away from the field to hide her jealous feelings in the shelter of the house. She could not remain any longer to witness Gerald being gradually fascinated by Emily Neville's coquettish way, and her natural delicacy made her shrink from the bare possibility of the young man guessing how much his desertion cost her. So, silently and noiselessly, she slipped away.

"Tell me," said Gerald to Emily, "are you ever serious?"

"Would you really like to see me serious?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Once in a way for a change."

"No, you wouldn't," she said, as, standing

up, she shook out the folds of her light robe, "for when I try to be serious I only succeed in being disagreeable. I see my cousin Richard coming along the road. I will go and meet him."

"You are in a great hurry. Stay yet a little while," he entreated. "It is so early. Do stay," he continued, as he saw symptoms of wavering.

"So," mused the young girl to herself, "like the rest of the men, he is but an overgrown child who can't see a fresh toy without longing to have it. Once he had it, he, too, would end by smashing it. Heigho! be it so; what does it matter to me?" Fixing her eyes on the young man's face, she said: "If it were only to falsify the old axiom which sets down so dogmatically that the woman who hesitates must end by yielding, I refuse to stay. Adieu."

Waving her hand to him, and lightly gathering her robe together, she tripped away. When half-way across the field, she turned and looked back. She stood an instant watching, and then retracing her steps, she advanced once more towards him. Placing her hand on his wrist, she said in a hurried tone:

"Don't be foolish. Bride Killeen is worth a

thousand such butterflies as I. Besides, she is in earnest ; I am not."

Before he could recover from the bewilderment caused by these words she was gone. She was gone, but the glamour of her presence still hung about him.

The sun was gradually sinking behind the hills, and the labourers, as they watched the glowing clouds, prophesied a continuance of fine weather. Some of the mowers, as they passed Gerald on their homeward route, made bantering remarks to each other on the young man's abstraction ; others of them, their scythes slung across their shoulders, chanted the refrain of *Bride Killeen's* mowing song.

Suddenly a hand was laid on Gerald's shoulder, and a voice whispered in his ear :

"Remember !"

Wakening, as if from a dream, the young man turned and saw Clarke.

"Remember," said Clarke, in a low tone. "Midnight is the hour. At the base of *Kylennamanna*, to the left of the wood, we are to meet the 'Master.'"

## CHAPTER IX.

### POST-NIGHT AT THE SHANTY.

KNOCKBEG has some six thousand souls by the census. It is one of the cleanest, most regularly-built, and most Quaker-like of assize-towns in the province of Munster. Its inhabitants, as a rule, are eminently respectable, law-abiding folk, and when any unlucky wight goes wrong amongst them he is quickly ostracised by the rest of the community. But this is a system hardly peculiar to Knockbeg.

The town has two newspapers, two banks, and a handsome court-house, besides the inevitable jail and poor-house. On the top of the court-house is majestically seated a large figure, which the natives term "Madame Justice." She bears a sword and scale, but, unfortunately for the stately lady's reputation, one cup of her scale

hangs very much lower than the other. The Knockbegites are always meaning to adjust that scale; but, somehow, here, as elsewhere, what is put off from day to day is put off indefinitely. The town contains one broad, long sweep of street, called Castle Street, from the ruins of a rough, lichen-clad circular keep—one of the “towers of O’Kennedy”—to be found in a field at the back of one of its houses. The upper part of this street is occupied by good-sized dwelling-houses, the lower part by shops of various kinds. The shopkeepers of Knockbeg are a fairly prosperous class, and their wives and daughters wear velvet and silk going to Mass or prayers on Sundays, and have their private jaunting-cars to take them picnicing in summer to the banks of the Shannon, and some amongst them can even boast of owning lodges at Lahinch or Kilkee, where they can send their children to inhale the ozone of the wild Atlantic on the rock-bound coast of the county Clare.

We had almost forgotten that there is an infantry barrack in the place, but it is not always garrisoned. There is a county club, but it is seldom full except on the occasions of the monthly fairs, when the gentry of the surrounding districts bargain with each other for business,

and backbite each other for pleasure. Now and again a travelling circus or troupe of strollers gives a galvanic spasm to the semi-rural monotony of its existence. There is a municipal body, but, when it is convoked, very often there is no quorum. In short, Knockbeg is like too many provincial capitals in Ireland—there is no social brightness, no bustling traffic, no regular provision for honest amusement; life there is not life, but vegetation.

The one glaring eyesore in the town, the standing protest against its propriety, is “the Shanty,” Peter O’Brady’s roomy ramshackle of an old house.

The Shanty has been in Chancery for a great many years, and Peter should, according to law, be paying rent to somebody. But he avers that, as two distinct persons apply to him, claiming to have an equal lien on the place, he has no alternative but to keep the money in his own pocket. On the same happy-go-lucky principle he refuses to lay out anything on repairs, always consoling himself with the thought that, as the house has lasted so long, it must surely last his time.

It is Saturday afternoon, and several men are gathered in the editorial sanctum of the Shanty,

helping Peter O'Brady to correct the final proofs of the forthcoming copy of *The Avenger*. Leaning against the wall at one end are three or four heavy riding-whips, bearing evidence that some of those men here have come on horseback.

Two Catholic clergymen are seated at the centre table, busy writing. One or two business men and some farmers are disposed around in different attitudes, chatting with each other, and Peter O'Brady himself is hopping in and out with a jaunty, free-and-easy air, his eye-glass stuck in his eye.

"Peter," said a middle-aged, round-bodied, florid-complexioned priest from the table, "I have written a capital article here on reviving the good old customs of the country. You must put it in."

"No time, Father Rody, no time. We are going to press in a few minutes."

"O'Brady," called out a tall, spare man, who was lounging against the chimney-piece, "I want my advertisement to be in a conspicuous place this week."

"All right, Spillane, my friend, all right. When your turn comes round you shall have all the front page to yourself. Of course, you don't mind what you pay for it?" Here he winked



knowingly at a sturdy farmer who was laughing on the sofa.

"Av ye plaze, Misthur O'Brady," said a small boy, putting a grinning countenance in at the door, "me mother wants a dacent copy of *The Avinger* this week. The wan you sint her last week was all in flitters, and no print at all in the middle part, an' here's the money, av ye plaze, sir."

"Come here, you young imp," cried Peter, catching the boy by the ear and pulling him into the room, "you go home and tell your mother when she irons my shirts properly and doesn't wrench off all the buttons I'll send her proper newspapers. Now give me that money you've got in your hand."

"Id's sixpence, sir, an' plaze give me a penny back," said the boy whimpering.

"Get off with you, you young scamp, and tell your mother the extra penny is for her impudent message."

"May I come in, O'Brady?" said a voice from the doorway.

"Come along, Major, come along," answered Peter graciously. "You're just the man I want. Here is something about the army I want you to throw an eye over."

The portly form of Major Silverthorne came looming into the room. Bestowing a military salute on the clergyman and nodding cavalierly to the others, he planted himself on the edge of the table, with his legs swinging down.

"O'Brady, my boy," said he, "you are all very cosy here, but look too like a set of teetotallers for my taste. Dry work is always dull work. Now, haven't you got something in that cupboard yonder?" he asked insinuatingly.

"Not a drop, until after we go to press," said Peter, as he handed him a proof to correct.

"Look here, O'Brady," said the farmer on the sofa, "I can't make head or tail of this advertisement. Does Mrs. Fogarty, of Baltore, want a dairymaid, or does the dairymaid want Mrs. Fogarty?"

"Where's the use of giving you a proof, Delaney, if you can't correct it without troubling me? Make sense of it, make sense of it."

"Peter," said a young, handsome, sharp-featured priest, who was seated apart from the rest by a desk, "just glance over this article. The 'shoulds' and 'woulds' are all mixed up, and the quotations and metaphors have no bearing whatever on the subject."

"Ah!" said Peter, as he heaved a sigh,

"that's the fault of my romantic foreman. He is always falling in love, and while in that blissful state he is liable to add flowery and poetic additions of his own to the columns of *The Avenger*."

A dirty-faced boy, with his clothes all smudged with printer's ink, now popped in his head, and called out :

"Av ye plaze, sir, Misther Joe wants thim proofs."

"I'll bring them to the printing-office presently," was Peter's answer.

The small boy sneered incredulously, and repeated :

"I must have thim proofs, sir ; Misther Joe said I wasn't to cum widout 'em."

"Begone, devil, or I'll exorcise you," cried the Major, as jumping off the table he made a plunge at the boy.

The boy retreated, but stealing back a moment after, he danced up and down screaming ;

"I want thim proofs ; I want thim proofs."

Then before the irate Major could catch him, he ran for his life to the back premises.

In a few minutes a young man of about eight-and-twenty, with a drawn, anxious expression, appeared at the door. He was in his shirt-

sleeves, and wore his straw-coloured hair very long.

"Will you give me the proofs, sir?" said he. "I want to go to press at once."

"All right, Joseph, all right, don't be in such a flurry," said Peter. Then turning his back coolly on his foreman, he commenced to joke with the Major.

"Mr. O'Brady," expostulated the anxious foreman, "we really must go to press or we'll lose the post."

"All right, Joseph, take it easy, take it easy," said his master. Then, remembering something, he put his hand through his brown crop of curls and said, "I have forgotten that advertisement of Father John Kennedy's. He wants a horse."

"We have neither time nor room now," cried the foreman impatiently. "We shall never be ready for the post."

"Post or no post," cried Peter, "Father John's advertisement must go in this week, even if you have to take out the leading article to make room for it."

"Sir," said the foreman, wringing his hands in despair, "do you know what o'clock it is?"

"What o'clock?" asked Peter, raising his

eye-glass and staring at the young man with an air of simulated surprise. "Clocks and watches were invented for slaves, and were never meant to hamper freemen."

"Sir," said Joe piteously, "I have been seven years with you, and always managed to save the post. It would break my heart to lose it to-night, so I'll just go to press, proofs or no proofs." Saying this, the foreman moved to the door.

O'Brady gathered the proofs hastily from his obliging friends, and leisurely followed his foreman. Presently he returned again, and flinging himself into a chair, he said :

"I have been turned out of my own office, and by my own foreman !"

"Come, O'Brady," said the Major, "I'm very thirsty. Haven't you got a drop of the contraband in that snug cupboard of yours ?"

"Contraband !" cried Peter with an innocent air. "Why, what do you take me for, Major ? It is true that a friend of mine"—here he winked knowingly at the farmer on the sofa—"being aware of the weakness of my chest, sent me a jar of medicine distilled from potent herbs. It smells a little like poteen, but anything contraband, oh no, Major, oh no, not for the world."

Whilst speaking, Peter went to the cupboard, and, opening it, took from the bottom part a heavy jar, which he lifted and placed on the centre table, whose weak limbs moaned beneath the unusual weight. Then going to the door he called out :

“Judy, Judy, bring glasses, hot water, sugar, lemons, and don’t forget the tea for Father Terence Delaney.”

The serving-woman soon appeared carrying a tray with a couple of tea-cups and saucers of contrasting patterns and a broken-nosed tea-pot. Making a curtsy all round, Judy placed the tray on the top of the desk near the young priest, Father Terence Delaney, and said :

“Sure, yer reverence, our taypot has been to the wars, and our cups and saucers are all married to the wrong couples, but the tay is fine and sthrong, an’ there’s a rale drop of crame for ye.”

The small boy who had made faces at the Major stood in the doorway, holding a tray laden with the ingredients necessary for the punch. He was afraid to approach lest the doughty Major might box his ears. Peter took the tray, and the Major made an ineffectual kick

at the "devil," who fled once more to the back regions.

"Father Rody Toole," said Peter O'Brady, "will you mix the medicine? This is one of the good old customs which needs no reviving to keep it alive."

"Peter," said the jolly-looking priest, as he drew up to the table, "do you mean to make private stills of us all?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Major. "Very good, Father Rody, private still, ha! ha! Now I like my medicine very strong, Father Rody. Too much water disagrees with me."

"Ned," said Father Terence, addressing the sturdy farmer on the sofa, "you will join me in a cup of tea?"

Ned Delaney looked ruefully at the jar of poteen, and then said in a hesitating voice, as if half-ashamed of himself: "If you don't mind, Terence, I would prefer just a taste of O'Brady's medicine."

The young priest sighed sadly as he took up the tea-pot, and poured out some of its contents.

"I would like a cup of your tea, Father Terence," said the tall, spare man from the chimney corner.

"What!" exclaimed the Major, "Spillane has taken the pledge?"

"It's all your fault, Major," said Spillane, "you sent me home in such a state the other night, that my wife said she would go to her father's to live unless I took the pledge."

"Ah, Spillane!" said the Major, with a chuckle, "you weak-headed fellows should never mix your liquors."

Peter O'Brady, who had been lying comfortably back in an easy chair, with his legs crossed, and his tumbler on the table in front of him, now stooped forward in an attitude of listening to some sound from the printing-office to the rear.

"Gentlemen," he said, "*The Avenger* is going to press, and soon, like an escaped eagle, will be flying over town and country."

In the space of ten minutes the anxious foreman with the straw-coloured hair came into the room, carrying a bundle of newspapers, which he distributed. Peter O'Brady sat very quietly, and looked complacently round at his friends, as each one of them sought the part of the paper of special interest to himself. His mouth twitched humorously as some thought crossed his brain. The farmer on the sofa got



up, and, coming behind Peter's chair, whispered in his ear :

"Now's your time, O'Brady, now's your time. Have at them."

"Presently," said Peter, "presently."

"O'Brady," cried Major Silverthorne, who was getting tired of the silence, "I drink to your health, and may you never lose the post." Then, raising his glass to his mouth, he gulped its contents at a draught.

"Bravo, Major, bravo!" said Ned Delaney. "Here's to the health of the editor of *The Avenger*, and may he live for ever."

"Thank you, Major," said Peter, "and thank all of you, my dear friends, here around me for your kindness in helping me to edit *The Avenger*. In fact, I don't know how I could have managed to get on without your valuable aid." Here he paused and shook his head at the farmer, who was making signs at him.

"What is the sly dog blarneying them for now?" muttered the Major.

"My friends," continued Peter, "I have something very particular to tell you. I have a project in my head about which I am desirous to consult you all." Here he screwed his eye-

glass in his eye, and leisurely surveyed the eager faces bent towards him.

"What is it, O'Brady?" called out one of his townsmen. "Whatever your project may be, you don't doubt that we will all help you?"

"I do not doubt any one of you. You have stood by me too often for me not to have faith in you now."

"What can he be up to?" muttered the Major, as he glanced admiringly at Peter leaning carelessly back in his arm-chair. "I wonder if he wants to borrow money."

"*The Avenger* is one of the institutions of the town," said Peter, "and whatever reflects glory on *The Avenger* or its owner," he added modestly, "must also redound to the credit of our gallant country in general, and our noble town in particular. Well, my friends, I have been thinking of——"

Here he paused again, and first giving a shrewd glance at Father Rody Toole, who was looking down into his tumbler, he turned his eyes towards the young priest, who was sipping his tea at the desk. Father Rody raised his head, and tapping his foot impatiently said :

"Come, Peter, what are you driving at?"

We will all stick to you through thick and thin. Now, what is it?"

"And you, Father Terence, will you also promise to help me?" asked Peter, addressing the young priest.

Father Terence lifted his eyes and spoke in a very quiet tone :

"How can I promise to help you, Peter, when I don't know what it is all about? I love you as I love my own brother, and would do anything for you, consistent with my duty and the duty I owe my Church."

"Look here, Father Terence," said Father Rody Toole, "I don't like your half-hearted ways. Peter is our friend, and we'll stand by him under any circumstances."

"That we shall. Every man of us," cried simultaneously all his townsmen.

"Thank you, my friends, thank you," said Peter. "It is my intention to——"

"If ye plaze, Misther O'Brady," said a butcher's boy, from the doorway, "me missus's compliments, an' here's some sweetbreads for yer breakfast. She bid me tell ye she had such trouble to keep 'em from that ould glutton, Major—— Och, murther! but sure I've put me foot in it," cried the boy, as he caught sight

of the gallant Major now perched on the arm of the sofa.

"Take them to the kitchen, boy," said Peter. "My foreman will give you a copy of *The Avenger* for your mistress."

"O'Brady," cried the Major, "you're the slyest dog in the town."

"Peter," said Father Rody, "go on. What were you going to tell us?"

"I have been thinking of——"

Here his eyes twinkled with fun, as he noticed the curiosity depicted on the faces of the listening group.

"Come, O'Brady, out with it—out with it," said Ned Delaney.

"It is my intention," resumed Peter, "to——"

"Be yer lave, Misther O'Brady," said a man, who now made his appearance with a winehamper on his arm. "Me missis has sent ye three bottles of '42 port, an' if she hadn't been sharp enough, the masther would have sowld 'em to that ould epicure, Major—— Oh! be the powers, I'm done for," said the man, as he became conscious of the Major glaring at him wrathfully.

"Take them to the kitchen, and get your copy of *The Avenger*," said Peter, with a gracious wave of the hand.

"Wine and sweetbreads! Wine and sweetbreads!" cried the Major indignantly. "Look here, O'Brady, you owe me a 'pony' since that affair of Mickey Dwyer's, and you'll pay it back to me. I won't stand any more of your nonsense."

"Hush, my friend, hush," said Peter. "You are not going to disgrace yourself in a bit of a temper for nothing. You have been quite the lion of the town ever since that munificent gift was distributed amongst the poor."

"Peter," said Father Rody Toole, "I wish you'd come to the point at once, and tell us what you intend doing."

"Ay, do," cried Spillane. "You've such a habit of wandering away from your subject. You have excited all our curiosity. Now, what's it all about?"

Peter smiled, and sticking his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets, made a cursory survey of the company before venturing to speak once more.

"My friends," said he, "as I have stirred up your curiosity, the sooner I allay it the better. As you know of old, I am not an ambitious man, but still I mean to——"

This sentence was doomed never to be com-

pleted, for Peter was interrupted by the unexpected advent of Bride Killeen, who stood in the doorway, her eyes fixed on him with a look of mute anguish. Peter, pushing past the Major, hurried to her, and said in a low tone :

“What is it, Bride ? Not *that* again ?”

“For God’s sake, Peter,” gasped the young girl, “come—come at once.”

“Calm yourself, my dear Bride,” he whispered cautiously. “They’ll wonder at your agitated manner. Go in to Judy a moment, and I’ll join you.”

“For God’s sake, hurry, Peter. There’s no time to be lost. I’ve got the car outside.”

“Go into the kitchen, my dear. I’ll be with you in a couple of minutes.”

As soon as the young girl disappeared, Peter returned to the middle of the room, and, with a nonchalant manner, said :

“My friends, I must beg of you to excuse me. I am going over to Lusmore to spend the night there. Delaney,” he added, turning to the farmer, “will you look after matters for me here ? I hope you will all make yourselves comfortable. I am sorry to be forced to tear myself away from your very pleasant society, particularly when I was about to explain to you a

matter of much interest to both you and myself. Now, my friends, make free use of my medicine in my absence, only leave me a dose for the morning."

"But, O'Brady, you dog," cried the Major, "what are you up to now? You are not going to run away with that fine girl, are you?"

Before his friends could ask him any further questions, Peter hastily left the room.

"There is something queer going on at the chapel-house of Lusmore," said Father Rody Toole. "With all Father John Kennedy's haughty ways he has some painful secret, and it is known to Peter O'Brady."

"Tut, tut! Father Rody," said the Major. "O'Brady is like a sieve, he couldn't keep a secret. More likely he is after that fine girl. By Jove, what a figure she has!"

Father Terence Delaney stood up, and, taking his riding-whip from its corner, prepared to go.

"I don't think we have any right," said he quietly, "to meddle in what concerns Father John Kennedy. We ought all to be proud of his learning and intellect. For the last two years he seems to me to be weighed down by the burden of some great sorrow, and, guessing such to be the case, I would be heartily ashamed to pry into what is no business of any of us."

"Look here, Father Terence," said Father Rody Toole, "you may guess what you like, or think what you like, but I'm for straightforward ways. None of your secrets for me. I am for things and men that are not ashamed of the broad daylight."

Father Terence shook his head gently, but made no reply. Bidding "good-bye" to everyone generally, he shook hands with the farmer and said :

"Ned, I beg of you, do not drink any more of Peter's poteen to-night."

"I promise you that I won't, Terence," was his brother's answer.

As soon as the young priest had gone, Ned Delaney cried out enthusiastically :

"My brother, Father Terence, is a real saint, if there ever was one on earth."

"Oh !" ejaculated Father Rody with a sniff, as he reached his hand for the whip, "there are saints and saints, and prigs and prigs." Then he went into the hall, but presently returning he called out from the threshold :

"Look here, Ned Delaney, it is high time you got married. There is a nice little girl in my parish who has got a snug bit of money."



"If I marry I'll take a wife out of my own parish of Lusmore," said the farmer.

"There are as fine girls in my parish as ever there were in Lusmore," said Father Rody. "You just think over it, Ned."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Major; "Father Rody, won't you look out someone for me also? If you do, I promise you I'll help you to revive some of the good old customs."

The priest shook his whip in playful menace at the speaker, and then disappeared.

"Now that the clergy are gone," said the Major, "let us make a night of it. Judy, you old sinner," he called out, "bring some more hot water, and cook me some of those sweet-breads, and I'll have a bottle of that '42 port. Hurry up, you old sinner, hurry up."

## CHAPTER X.

### WHAT THE HARVEST MOON SAW.

Two months have passed by since Bride Killeen, with pale face and agitated manner, appeared at the Shanty, and hurried O'Brady away from the midst of his convivial friends ; but still the secret of the chapel-house remains as great a secret as ever.

Many post-nights have come and gone, and occasionally the wily editor of *The Avenger* diverts himself by putting his townsmen's curiosity on the tenter-hooks by breaking out with the sentence, which he never finishes : " My friends, I am going to——"

Hinson and Clarke have dropped in again on Father John on their way back from the South. Once more Clarke makes a passionate appeal to the priest to join their organisation, and is met with the same firm but emotional refusal.

Kennedy has never repeated the question, the answer to which was interrupted by the entrance of Sall-o'-the-Wig with the supper tray in the early summer-time.

Once the proud priest had expressed a wish on the matter he could not deem it possible that Hinson or Clarke would dare tamper with his flock without his cognizance.

Night broods over the vale of Lusmore.

The stars, those far off-worlds of mystery and brightness, gem the dark, clear firmament with their myriad points of quivering fire, and the harvest moon hangs suspended in the mid heavens like a globe of mellow light, and floods with its soft effulgence homestead and pasture-land, hill-top and clefted gorge.

Sleep, the peasant's luxury, descends and enfolds the valley within the shadow of its reposeful wings.

All seems at rest, and save when an uneasy corncrake raises its grating note from a half-cut wheat-field, or some restless night-bird croaks as it flits through space, no sounds are heard but the sougling of the wind through the trees and the ever-ceaseless gurgle of the rushing river.

The moon's rays enter through a window of the chapel-house, and fall across the sleeping

face of John Kennedy. The room is bare in its simplicity, the bedstead iron, the floor uncarpeted, the window uncurtained; but the moonlight and the still beauty of the soul-dreaming face are sufficient to fill it with a weird, unearthly loveliness.

John Kennedy sleeps, and knows not that stealthy steps are hurrying to and fro the while through his house. A foot stumbles on the spiral staircase, a hinge creaks, a bolt is shot swiftly backwards, and two men pass out on the lawn, hold a whispered consultation, and then, quitting the tell-tale gravel for the discreet grass, they hurry along, side by side, until they reach the road. The noise they made in shutting the front door has slightly disturbed the sleeper, for he stirs, parts his eyelids, gazes at the stars, then, murmuring faintly to himself, he smiles, and, turning on his side, falls to sleep again.

Over at the Rectory, the ivy, interlaced around the window-frames, gives a more fantastic form to the moonlight which streams into the Rector's comfortable bedroom.

Adam Glover is troubled with the nightmare, and tosses restlessly. At length, waking, he rises, draws back the curtain, and looks out.

“ Why should I be so uneasy ? ” he muses, as his eyes wander from the white road to the obscure thickness of the wood of Killavalla, and thence again to the white firmament above.

“ How delicious the night is ! How tranquil ! How brilliant ! Oh, Thou omnipotent Creator of stars and men ! ” he syllabled in prayer, “ enlighten me, teach me, descend into my soul and leave there a spark of Thy Divine Intelligence to illumine the darkness which encompasses me. Thou, alone, knowest how feeble I am ; how little I have accomplished and how much better I might have done those things which I have slurred over in haste, and without the zeal they merited. This presentiment which closes round my heart like a net, is it a warning from Thee ? or, is it the phantasm of a brain clouded from age ? Sixty years of this world have passed over me, and they call me old ; but, oh, Father ! what are these dim specks of time to Thy Infinity ! I am still Thy weak, foolish child, blindly tottering along the path of life, groping and searching perpetually for Thy guiding hand. Why hast Thou placed me over this people ? Why hast Thou given me such a trust ? I, so poor, so incompetent ; I who require to be led myself instead of leading others——”

The Rector's attention was suddenly attracted from heaven to earth by the jar of footsteps ringing sharply on the dry road beneath. Looking down, he imagined he saw several shadows skirting along by the bank which led to the wood of Killavalla.

He rubbed his eyes with the intention of taking a better view ; but, when he looked the second time, he saw naught but the slowly-waving trees, the sombre wood, the outline of the mountain, and the moonlit road.

" Was it fancy ? " he thought. " What could anyone in the valley want out in the middle of the night ? Could it be John Kennedy going to a sick-call ? No, they were more than one, and he would have a horse, and would have galloped through the village, rousing all the sleepers with the sharp clattering of his horse's hoofs. I must talk to him about this to-morrow. There was Tracey, an old schoolmate of mine, who was afflicted with a softening of the brain at my present age, and was always rambling about shadows he saw and voices he heard. Perhaps I may grow like him. God's will be done ! It does seem awful to lose the possession of one's senses ; but, maybe, after all, it is the lookers-on who suffer most."

Adam Glover closed the curtains and returned to his bed, and though racked with conflicting and confusing doubts, still his soul was full of an all-confiding faith in the wisdom of Providence, and sleep soon came to restore and refresh his spirit.

The shadow of the mountain spreads over the unruffled bosom of the lake; the stately swans who by day float over the surface of the waters, arching their graceful necks in the pride of conscious beauty, now are cowering against the sedgy bank.

Castle Neville is also shaded with the gloom of the mountain; but in spite of this, and notwithstanding the vicinage of the hundred-year-old oak, so carefully propped with iron grapnels, the moonlight manages to penetrate through a stained glass Gothic window into a bedroom. Wealth and taste have been expended with no sparing hand on the adornment of this apartment, and it would seem as if inanimate things must acquire some of the individuality of their owner, for all in this room bears the stamp of Emily Neville.

The furniture is light and elegant, fragile and evanescent-looking as the fair enigma to whom it belongs. Here and there on the soft carpet of

velvet pile, articles of dress and jewellery are scattered, flung in petulant wantonness by the wearer, whose fitful changeability of mood often urges her to tear off and trample on the fashionable gauds and fripperies with which she had decked herself some hours previously.

Nestled 'mid eider-down pillows, and shrouded by curtains of the palest rose satin, trimmed with lace as transparent as a cobweb, lies Emily Neville. Is it the glow of the rose satin which causes the flush on her face, the colour on her eyelids? She resembles a spoiled child who has just cried itself to sleep, and still the red lips pout, and the short, irregular respiration is suggestive of the half-stifled sob of unsatisfied temper.

The golden ringlets are all loose, and twined in wavy tangles 'mid the lace frills of the pillow. One round, white arm is flung over her head in a half-circling bend; the fingers of the other hand loosely clasp the dainty embroidery which partly hides the quick swellings of the blue-veined, slender throat.

Emily sleeps, and now a joyous smile lights up the dimples of the infantile face, and then again a change comes, and the smooth brow is contracted and creased, and the curve of the lip



is marred with harsh lines. Soon this is succeeded by an expression of wilful impatience, which subsides again to the calm of weariness and lassitude.

Snatches of song break from time to time on the silence; but the sleeper is dreaming so heavily that, instead of waking her, the sound melts into and becomes part of the visionary drama which is acting itself out in her brain.

Reclining on a maroon velvet divan in the octagonal smoking saloon, which is underneath Emily's bedroom, Richard Neville is smoking and drinking. The chandelier is all ablaze, and the three French windows, leading to the lawn, are flung wide open, and he laughs the unrestrained laugh of a schoolboy as he drains bumper after bumper of rosy wine. His face is flushed, his eyes glitter, and he feels too exultant, too excited, to think of retiring to rest.

Though the possessor of a castle on solid ground, the lord of the valley is no more exempt than the ambitious hind from indulging in the charming folly of building castles in the air. He is so happy, so utterly content with himself, and with everybody else for that matter, and from time to time his exuberance finds vent in a snatch of song.

What can be the reason of all this? It takes but a trifle to make some people happy. A few sweet regards, a few careless words, instigated perhaps by a spirit of malicious coquetry, have filled this man's heart with a superabundant gladness. Emily has been really kind to him for the first time. When driving her home from paying a visit at the chapel-house that afternoon, she had dropped her head on his shoulder an instant, and looking up into his face with an expression of unwonted tenderness, had murmured caressingly :

“Dear old Dick !”

And now it is not the wine which intoxicates the young landlord, but the remembrance of his cousin's words and look, for he loves her. This is why he laughs and sings, and builds airy fabrics, making fairy pictures to himself of a golden head, which he strokes fondly in imagination, of a soft, dimpled, pink-and-white face which rests against his breast, of a pair of clinging arms which encircle his neck, of a pair of blue eyes which, though mocking the rest of the world, overflow with unutterable love for him.

His newly-born hope makes him unusually thoughtful and considerate towards his fellow-

creatures at large, and he feels a generous craving to do good to everybody. Some spirit stirs within him, urging him to be actively benevolent. He will build two more schools, and he will get the rector and the priest to help him to plan out some scheme for the benefit of all his tenants, farmers and labourers alike.

Yes ! he will commence the very next day.

And it is Emily's words which have caused all this, and while the young landlord revels in visions of a bright future shared with her, she sleeps unconsciously, and her cousin, Richard Neville, forms no part of her troubled dreams.

Along the moonlit road, which skirts the base of Kylenamanna, groups of men are hurrying ; some of the more active amongst them have already begun winding up the steep side of the hill, while those who lag behind whisper to each other about the business for which they have been roused from their midnight slumbers.

When they all reach the summit of the hill, the scattered clusters form themselves into a single mass, and then three men detach themselves from the main body, and going aside, hold conference.

Presently, one of the three steps forward from his companions and prepares to address the expectant crowd.

The moonlight falling on him reveals the slight form, pale face, and shining eyes of William Clarke.

He speaks of Ireland, and his high-wrought voice vibrates on the night air, and its sharper tones are strangely re-echoed from the bottom of the mountain gorge to his left.

A few paces behind him Hinson, with head sunken forward, passes his delicate fingers slowly through his beard and listens, and close to Hinson's side stands Gerald Moore.

All at once, Clarke's impassioned address is interrupted by a wild cheer, which is followed by a succession of incoherent ejaculations; the crowd sway to and fro for a few moments, and then again, animated by a single irresistible impulse, the cheer bursts forth anew, hands are clutched convulsively, and vows are muttered between half-shut teeth.

When silence is restored, Clarke essays to speak once more; but he has exhausted himself entirely in his previous effort, and his voice falters in the middle of a sentence, quavers uncertainly, and stops short.

"You are unnecessarily overtaxing your strength," whispers Hinson from behind. "The night is passing. Let us proceed to something more practical."

Clarke yields passively to his *confrère*, and allows himself to be led away.

Gerald Moore beckons silently to the crowd, and they follow in the young man's track, and soon disappear into the depths of the gloomy gorge, whence shortly before had come such an uncanny echo to Clarke's vehement tones.

Night reigns over the vale of Lusmore, and the harvest moon shines serenely down, bathing with its silver radiance homestead and pasture-land, mountain and glen.

The gentle wind sighs through the trees, the river ripples ever ceaselessly onwards, the night-bird croaks as it flits to and fro, and the timid corncrake still voices uneasily from its last shelter 'mid the few remaining rows of uncut wheat.

## Part II.—The Brotherhood.

“ All day long, in unrest,  
    To and fro do I move ;  
The very soul within my breast  
    Is wasted for you, love !  
The heart . . . in my bosom faints,  
    To think of you, my queen,  
My life of life, my saint of saints,  
    My Dark Rosaleen ! ”



## CHAPTER I.

DREAR NOVEMBER.

"MISS BRIDE, ye may say what ye plaze, but everythin' has gone wrong since that forrin knife has been in the house."

"You stupid thing," said Bride Killeen, laughing, as, taking off her holland pinafore, she pushed the flour-board from before her and dusted some white specks off her crimson merino dress. "Now, Jane," said the young girl, turning her back on the kitchen table and facing the servant, "what possible harm could Uncle John's Cuban dagger do lying so quietly on the chimney-piece in the parlour? And, besides, what has gone wrong?"

"Lots o' things, lots o' things, miss," said Jane, shaking her head. "I had an awful dhrame last night," she whispered, in an awe-



stricken tone, as she glanced round her with a frightened expression. "An awful dhrame! I dhreamt that Father John, Lord betune us and harm, was standin' over me lookin' that angry, an' I was on me knees, an' he was flourishin' the forrin knife above me head, an' all the shinin' stones wor turned to red, red blood, an' dripped from the knife on my face. An' I was that froze with terror that I couldn't cry out. Oh! Miss Bride, alanna, get that forrin knife out o' the house. Oh! alanna, if I live a thousand years I'll never forget that awful dhrame. Father John's face was that dreadful, an' he looked as if he could murther me."

"Stop! for God's sake, stop!" cried Bride, shivering. The young girl had grown very pale, while the servant was speaking. "Don't tell me any more of your dreams, Jane. You will make me feel almost as superstitious as yourself."

"Miss Bride," said the woman, "dhrames are often sent as a warnin'. I tould ye in the summer, whin ye spoke of a knife an' a ring in the wan breath, that there'd be blood betune 'em afore twelve moons had gone by, an', alanna, I'm afeerd, I'm sore afeerd, of that dhrame I dhreamt last night. When I saw yer Uncle

John with that forrin' knife, agoin' to murther me, sure——"

"For God's sake, hold your tongue," interrupted the young girl impatiently. "Why do you say such horrid things? I won't listen to you any more. Take up that loaf. It must be well baked by this time."

Muttering and grumbling to herself, Jane stooped over the flat iron pot in which the bread was baking. Lifting the lid, covered with half-burnt sods of turf, carefully off with the tongs, she took out a tempting brown loaf, with a shiny crust, and placed it standing up against three others already cooling on the table. Then she crossed her hands and remained huffily silent. She was indignant because her young mistress had not expressed more sympathy with her dream.

"Jane," said Bride, "those four loaves will have to last you until I return from Mrs. Fogarty's. If you are short, you can get some bread in the village or make some hot cakes."

"Whin are ye goin', miss, and can Sall-o'-the Wig stop wid me while ye're away? What with the black cat an' that forrin' knife, I'd be afeerd o' me life to stay in the house alone."

"I am going to Mrs. Fogarty's in about an hour's time, to help her to get ready for the

party she gives to-morrow. Sally may sleep with you to-night, but she must bring her fiddle to Baltore by eight o'clock to-morrow evening. We shall want her to play for dancing. If you like you can ask your cousin, Mary Gleeson, to stop with you while I am away. When is her wedding to take place?"

"Sure, I don't know, miss," said Jane dolefully. "Jim has put it off until afther the spring. I don't know what's come over all the young men of the parish. Ye never meet any of 'em out now sweetheartin'; they're always *colloquin* with wan another in holes an' corners, an' never pay the laste attintion to any o' the girls. It's not natheral, I tell ye, Miss Bride. It's not natheral."

"How strange!" exclaimed the young girl. "Why doesn't Mary give up Jim? she has no pride, or she wouldn't let him treat her so."

"It's very aisy for ye to talk, Miss Bride. It's very aisy for ye to talk. Mary's fond of Jim, an' it would brake her heart to give him up. A lady like you is different, maybe ye wouldn't feel much about it; but whin the likes o' Mary cares for a man she sticks to him." The woman commenced to scrape the dried flour off the board on which the dough had been mixed. After

a moment she glanced out of the corner of her eye at her young mistress, and said :

“ Mr. Moore seldom or never comes here now, miss. Musha, what quare crathurs min are ! He was here every day, and sometimes twice a day in the beginnin’ o’ the summer.”

Bride blushed rosy red but said nothing. Hearing a tap at the front door the young girl hurried to open it. Adam Glover was standing outside.

“ Bride,” said the Rector, “ I want to see your uncle on private business. Is he at home, or has he anyone with him ? ”

“ He is quite alone,” said Bride, as, opening the parlour door, she ushered the Rector into her uncle’s presence.

“ Adam, my dear friend,” said Father John, getting up from his seat beside the fire to shake hands with his visitor, “ it is a real charity for you to come to see me in this cold weather. All my old visitors deserted me as soon as they smelt the winter coming on. Sit down and make yourself comfortable.”

Instead of sitting down, as desired, the Rector first closed the door after Bride, and then returning, leaned in a weary attitude against the edge of the mantelpiece. The priest, who had reseated

himself at the opposite side of the hearth, now stooped forward and, picking up the tongs, began to arrange the fire. He seemed intently occupied with the trivial action of clearing the ashes from between the bars, but all the while a playful smile hovered round his mouth. The Rector looked down at him for a moment or two before speaking.

"John," said he, at length, "what is it that has come over our people?"

"How? What?" exclaimed Father John, raising his head with surprise at this unexpected question.

"You have not noticed it, then, John?" said the Rector. "You have not noticed how some underhand influence has been at work in the valley for the past few months? You have not remarked eyes averted as you come near, and sullen faces that quickly strive to force a smile? You have not seen groups of men suddenly disperse and grow silent as you greet them?"

"I have seen none of this," said the priest.

"You have not seen shadows at night hurrying along the high-road? You have not felt an impalpable something gradually rise between you and your flock, dividing them from you, making you conscious how useless your ministry

is, for when you speak their hearts are as stones, not to be moved by you ? ”

Adam Glover spoke with his eyes fixed on the fire, and John Kennedy, now leaning back in his chair, watched the anxious face of his friend, and listened with an expression of intense interest.

“Go on, Adam,” said the priest, when the Rector paused. “I have seen none of this.”

“I can tell you no more, John,” continued the Rector, a weary line crossing his brow ; “for, even though conscious of this change in my flock, I cannot grasp at its cause. Latterly it has weighed so much on me that I made up my mind to tell you and ask your help.”

“What would you have me do ? ” demanded the priest, in a quiet tone.

“If you would show yourself more among the people,” said the Rector, now turning his eyes in the direction of his friend ; “if you would only mix a little with them, this strange change could not escape your notice, and you would be likely to find a very simple solution to what has puzzled me so much. If you would use your influence over your flock, it might in some sort have an effect on mine ; ” here he hesitated an instant before proceeding : “I would have told

you of this before, but I could hardly persuade myself that I was not the dupe of my own imagination. Our flocks have always been so united, and our peaceful valley is so far removed from the intrigues of the outer world, that it was not easy to believe in the existence of anything unusual."

Father John mused for a few moments.

"I can understand, Adam," said he, with a laugh of grim humour, "how difficult it was to believe anything out of the common could take place here. There may be reason for your uneasiness, or there may not. However," he added, with a smile, "I see you are bent on drawing me out of my lair, so just to quiet you I will think over this matter, and it is probable I may speak to the people on Sunday with reference to it. Now, smooth your brow and try to forget those peasants for a little while."

Whilst saying these last words the priest took up the tongs again, and built the fire together until it blazed up brightly, throwing a glow over his stern features.

The Rector sat down, and, resting his head against the wall, he put his right hand on the edge of the mantelpiece, close to the hilt of the Cuban dagger.

At this moment the door was pushed open, and a hearty voice called out :

"May I come in, Father John?"

"Come in, Richard, come in," said the priest, rising as the young landlord entered.

"How cosy and comfortable it feels in here!" said Richard Neville, as he drew up a chair and seated himself in front of the fire, after shaking hands with the Rector and the priest.

"How is Emily, and why doesn't she come to see me?" asked Father John.

"Emily is like a cat in this weather," said her cousin, laughing. "I tried to coax her out, but she wouldn't stir. Father John," said the young landlord suddenly, looking at the priest, "I'm sorry I ever signed those leases."

"Sorry! Why?"

"My tenants have grown so deuced insolent that, were it to do over again, frankly, I would take my agent's advice before either yours or Mr. Glover's. The curs are on the right side of the hedge, now, so they don't care a snap for me," said Richard Neville, in an angry tone, as he waxed wrathful at the remembrance of some insult he had received.

The Rector's hand, resting on the mantel-



piece by the Cuban dagger, trembled, and he looked imploringly at the priest.

“Insolent!” exclaimed Father John. “Why, as a rule, the Irish peasantry are cringing hat in hand, bowing and scraping. It is something altogether new to hear of their having independence enough to be insolent. Have you any special complaint to make?” he asked, as, lying back in his seat, he regarded the young landlord with an amused air.

“Special and general too!” said Richard Neville. “Yesterday in the streets of Knockbeg, Ned Delaney, by his insolence, made me the laughing-stock of the town. I wouldn’t have minded only Hunt and Major Silverthorne and the rest of them were looking on.”

“What did Ned Delaney do or say?” asked Father John, as he clasped his hands at the back of his head.

“He was passing me by unnoticed when I slightly touched his hat with my cane, and remarked that as I was his master he might take it off to me, and the fellow turned on me fiercely and shook his hand in my face, and said I wasn’t his master; but perhaps soon I might have to do with his master, and that I had better look to myself before the spring came, or I might not

have Castle Neville over my head. And what enraged me most was that Major Silverthorne, confound him ! clapped Delaney on the back, and burst out laughing, saying it was a capital joke."

"Ned Delaney must have been drinking and didn't know what he was saying," interposed the Rector mildly.

"I wonder Delaney didn't knock you down," said Father John quietly.

"John !" implored the Rector.

"It seems to me," said the priest in a cold tone, "that both landlords and tenants in this country are prone to regard from too sentimental a point of view what is merely a commercial transaction. You let your land and your tenant takes it, and both of you do so for the purpose of making a living out of it. Man to man, you are equal ; and I can't see why, if your tenant pays you a fair rent, you must expect him also to lick the dust beneath your feet."

Richard Neville stood up hurriedly, and clutched his hat, which he had left on the table, nervously between his hands.

"All I have to say," he cried in an angry tone, "is that I'm sorry I ever signed those leases. If I had it in my power now I'd turn them all out, neck and crop, for their insolent,

jeering ways to me during the last couple of months. As for all that talk about man to man, it is very few men you think your equal, Father John Kennedy."

"Richard, Richard!" said the Rector entreatingly.

The priest smiled, and looked up at the young landlord as if he were a mere child in a temper about a trifle.

"Richard," said he, smiling, "you are not half as vindictive as you wish to make yourself out to be."

"I have been a good landlord to them, and have always helped them and waited for my rent until it suited them to pay, and this is the way they treat me now."

At this point, to the intense relief of the Rector, the conversation was broken in upon by Bride Killeen entering the room, followed by the schoolmaster.

"Uncle John," said the young girl, "Mr. Mahon wishes to speak to you about the schools."

"What do you want, Mahon?" asked the priest.

"Well, sir," said the schoolmaster, as his eyes wandered round the room in every direction

except towards Father John, "I—I—am very sorry, but I have come to give notice."

"Give notice!" exclaimed the priest incredulously.

"My health has not been very well. The teaching keeps me indoors too much. If you please, I would like to give up the schools after Christmas."

"You appear uncommonly well for an invalid," said Father John sarcastically.

"I don't feel well, sir, and I have got the offer of another situation where I'll have more change." Here he twirled his soft, low-crowned hat nervously between his finger and thumb, and shuffled his feet uneasily.

"Another situation. What is it?" asked the priest.

The schoolmaster mumbled some words incoherently.

"Confound you, Mahon," exclaimed Richard Neville, who had been talking to Bride Killeen at the window. "Can't you speak out like a man instead of muttering down your throat?"

"I—I am going as commercial traveller to a Dublin firm," said the schoolmaster, after much hesitation, and still persistently looking away from Father John.

“What is the name of the firm?”

Mahon's lips grew white at the question, and he lowered his head on his chest to hide, if possible, the expression of his face. Then, with a gasp, he said :

“The firm is Downey and Blake's, wine merchants. Of course, sir,” he added, “I will remain on here until you find a substitute.”

“You had no intention of leaving the schools at midsummer, and so far as your health is concerned, you could have taken a holiday,” said the priest. “What is really your reason for going away?”

Pat Mahon winced under the shrewd glance, and hesitated before answering. Then, giving a look at the priest out of the corner of his eye, he said :

“Well, sir, I suppose we all wish to better ourselves, and I have been offered the place since then. Besides, I'm tired of teaching, and there's no money to be made at it.”

“Very well,” said Father John stiffly; “I will find someone to take your place after Christmas.”

“How is your mother, Mr. Mahon?” asked the Rector. “She will miss you very much. If you want any recommendations for your new

employers," he added kindly, "I will be very much pleased to do anything in my power for you."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir; but the firm I am about to travel for do not require references."

"More fool they," blurted out Richard Neville. As he spoke, the servant came into the room, carrying a basket of turf with which to replenish the fire. The Rector rose to get out of her way. In so doing, his elbow came in contact with the dagger and knocked it off the mantelpiece, and it fell with a clashing noise to the ground.

"The forrin knife—the forrin knife!" cried Jane, as, crouching on the ground, she recoiled in dismay from the dagger. Crossing herself rapidly, she began to mumble some prayers, swaying herself backwards and forwards on her heels.

"John," said the Rector, as he put the dagger back in its former position, "I'm afraid, in my awkwardness, I have knocked out some of the stones. Ah! here they are," he continued, as he picked up two large-sized rubies.

"This small accident will please somebody I know," said the priest, with a smile. "Richard,

I promised Emily the first of the gems which would fall out of my dagger. The rubies will do as a pair of ear-rings for her. You can get them set in Knockbeg."

"Knives an' rings — knives an' rings!" screamed Jane, from the hearthrug, her eyes starting out of her head with terror. "There'll be blood betune—there'll be blood betune."

"Go to the kitchen, woman," said the priest sternly.

Jane rose, her lips in quick, tremulous motion. As she went out of the room she shook her head dolefully at her young mistress, and uttered, in tragic tones, the words :

"The dhrame—the dhrame."

"Our servant is so much afraid of uncle's dagger," remarked Bride, laughingly, to Richard Neville. "Sometimes I'm quite cross with her, she goes on so nonsensically."

"Richard," said Father John, "here are the two rubies for Emily. They are a splendid colour."

The young landlord took the gems in his hand and held them to the light.

"It seems like robbing you, Father John," said he at length. "Those rubies must be worth at least fifty pounds each."

"Fifty pounds each!" exclaimed the schoolmaster, as his eyes glistened. "Then the dagger itself must be worth a mint of money."

"Never mind, Richard," said the priest. "Take them to Emily. I have half a mind to pick out a big emerald to set in a ring for my grandmother," he added, with a playful glance towards his niece.

Pat Mahon's eyes had been fixed greedily on the dagger ever since Richard Neville had mentioned the possible value of the rubies. There were not alone rubies, but diamonds and emeralds all round the hilt. The schoolmaster made a rapid calculation, and came to the conclusion that the dagger must be worth at least a thousand pounds. A thousand pounds! A thousand pounds lying daily on the mantelpiece without protection from thieves. And Father John was so careless, and the windows were often left unhasped at night, and it would be so easy to slip in and steal the dagger away while they were all asleep.

"Mahon, have you anything further to say?" asked Father John sharply.

The schoolmaster started and regarded the priest in a half-dazed fashion.



"No, sir, that's all. If you'll be kind enough to accept my notice about the schools."

Pat Mahon, smirking all round as a general salute, turned to leave the room; but, before doing so, he gave a parting glance at the shining hilt of the dagger, and his eyes glistened again.

"Emily will be waiting for me," said Richard Neville. "Are you coming, sir?" he asked of the Rector.

Adam Glover rose, but Father John said:

"Wait a moment, Adam, I have a word to say to you."

As soon as Richard Neville and Bride had left them alone, the priest spoke to the Rector:

"Adam, the insolence of Richard's tenants chimes in with your account of the change in our people. Before the week is over I will find out what it is." Suddenly Father John's keen ear was struck by the sound of a voice speaking in the passage outside. An instant thought flashed through the priest's brain. With a hasty movement he rose to his feet, and flinging the door wide open, he called out sharply:

"William. Come in."

Clarke entered, smiling, and extended his hand to Father John.

"*You* in this neighbourhood again!" said the priest, without touching the proffered hand.

These words were accompanied by a look so searching that Clarke recoiled, and first flushed and then grew deadly pale. On witnessing this emotion, Father John's face became very black, and, without speaking another word to the new-comer, he returned to the fire-place.

"John," said the Rector, "I will leave you with your friend. You will not forget."

As soon as the door closed behind Adam Glover, the priest approached the window, and, folding his arms, stood in front of where Clarke was seated.

"You were not wont to flinch before any man's regard, William," said he, with sarcastic emphasis. "There was a time when no head was so proudly uplifted, no eye so unquailing as yours, but that was long ago, William, and you were young, and youth is so foolishly honest."

Clarke stirred uneasily, but neither turned round nor spoke.

"Ah!" exclaimed Father John, Clarke's silence confirming his suspicion that the Rector had not been uneasy without cause.

The priest strode hastily to and fro, lost in reflection. Gradually a wild, threatening light

gleamed within his eyes, and, still continuing his irregular, agitated march, he said in a tone of harsh bitterness :

“ You have come under my roof, Hinson and you, and while deluding me with a shadowy outline of some hazy plan, you have been secretly worming yourself into the confidence of my simple people. You have enticed them into your meshes with frothing words, and whilst I was dreaming you have dared do this thing, without as much as ‘ by your leave, John Kennedy.’ Oh, how I despise and loathe your half-confidences, your mean, underhand ways——”

Here he arrested his steps and flashed round on the listener his tall, inflexible form and cast-iron face, instinct with the rage of a proud nature, writhing beneath the consciousness of having been duped.

“ Fools, fools !” he cried, with a scornful laugh, “ to think I would tamely submit to this, that I would let you trample on me. Fools and knaves, you have tried to make a tool of me for your own purpose, now I will crush you for mine. What hinders me from smashing you all as moths between my fingers ?”

Clarke rose to his feet, his face like death,

his sensitive frame trembling with nervous excitement.

"Crush us if you will, Kennedy, but you dare not betray our cause."

"Cause, cause!" repeated the priest, "every mountebank amongst you can prate of the cause when he wants to gloss over his own shuffling and dishonesty."

"Not even from you, Kennedy," cried Clarke, in accents of shrill anguish, "not even from you will I submit to this."

As he spoke he turned to leave the room, but Father John, divining his intentions, got between him and the door, and locking it took possession of the key. Clarke looked round an instant with the hunted expression of an animal at bay, and then before the priest could interfere to prevent him he raised the sash of the window, and vaulted through on to the gravel path outside.

"Farewell, Kennedy," he said. "Some day, perhaps, you will know whether I have been honest or not; till that day comes, farewell."

"Come back, come back," called out Father John.

"Kennedy, I will never enter your house again," said Clarke, with a sad smile, "till I can learn to meet your glance as before. I, too," he

continued, with an irrepressible burst of reproachful passionateness, "I, too, could have done as you, rested idly by my own fireside, ay, and had more inducements to tempt me to do so; for, while you stand alone and untrammelled, I have ties, young children that lisp my name and fond eyes that lure me to domestic joys. I, too, could have sheltered myself behind inaction and sneered and scoffed at the busy world abroad. I, too, committing myself to naught, could safely have lashed with my tongue the follies and weaknesses of men who sacrifice life, home, and happiness in efforts to grapple with a wrong. I have not done so; therefore I am a mountebank. This from *you*, Kennedy," he cried, with a convulsive stamp of the foot, as an expression of acute pain passed across his pallid brow and his dark-flashing eyes; "this from *you*."

Turning away with rapid steps and bowed head, he hastened along the avenue. Father John watched him until the corner of the garden wall hid his retreating figure from view. With a short, bitter laugh the priest reseated himself in his chair beside the fire, and, clasping his hands at the back of his head in his favourite attitude, he stared gloomily into the grate.

After a while, starting up again, he walked restlessly to and fro.

"How my head throbs and burns," he said to himself. "I feel as if every pore of my body had become so many pulses through which my life was quickly beating itself away. I will go and talk to Bride. The dear child's simple ways will soothe my wretched nerves."

He approached the door and turned the key. As he did so he heard a voice on the other side : "Father John, I have a letter from Mr. Peter O'Brady."

"Come in, Sally," said the priest in a relieved tone. "Give me Peter's letter. Why didn't he come himself?"

Sall-o'-the-Wig grinned as she searched in her many pockets before she found the letter. Handing it to Father John she spoke :

"Well, sir, Mr. O'Brady couldn't come yesterday for he wint to Mat Dougherty's funeral, which they say was a'most three miles long. To-day he's gone to Molly O'Malley's weddin', an' to-night he's goin' to wake old Missus Donoghue, an' to-morrow he'll be at Mrs. Fogarty's party, an'—an'—I think you'd betther read his letter, Father John, it'll tell ye all the news."

Then, with a broader grin than before, Sall seated herself on a low ottoman, at a respectful distance from the priest.

He smiled as he opened Peter's epistle, the contents of which were as follows :

"DEAR FATHER JOHN,

"I am going to astonish the natives of Knockbeg. Sarah will explain. I will come to you on Saturday night, and remain over Sunday.—Yours for ever,

"PETER O'BRADY."

## CHAPTER II.

### MRS. FOGARTY'S PARTY.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and Bride Killeen was busily occupied in the kitchen of a large farmhouse, situated about two miles distant from the chapel-house.

This kitchen was comfortably and substantially furnished, the ceiling was hung with fitches of bacon, and brown, shiny hams; and the long table beneath the dresser was loaded with jellies, and custards, and all sorts of tasty comestibles, giving sign of an approaching feast.

An enormous peat fire burned on the hearth, and in a low straw arm-chair, within the embrasure of the broad chimney-place, was seated a handsome lady of, apparently, about thirty years of age. She was plump and fair, with brown hair, a voluminous bust, a marvellously clear,



brilliant complexion, and a soft, kindly expression of countenance. This lady was Mrs. Fogarty of Baltore, whose name has been already mentioned in this story.

Alas, poor Mrs. Fogarty! Her personal charms and the gracious rotundity of her natural form could not hinder her from being one of those every-day-to-be-met-with failures, a square peg in a round hole. While her tastes and predilections were all artistic, fate had doomed her to be a farmer's wife, and a farmer's wife she was likely to remain to the end of the chapter. Her servants played upon her weakness, domineered over her, imposed on her easy good-nature, and took every advantage of her lack of housekeeping skill. The absence of all order and system in the management of his household often made her hard-working husband sigh; but while he sighed, sensible man, he resigned himself most amiably to what he found it impossible to alter.

But though Mrs. Fogarty was the worst of housekeepers, yet that did not prevent her from being the most popular woman round and about all Lusmore. Her house was famous for its hospitality, its jolly parties, its impromptu dances, its fun and frolic of all kinds; and if

sometimes a few friends laughed pleasantly at the fair mistress of Baltore's little peculiarities, they couldn't help but love her all the same.

"Mrs. Fogarty," said Bride, "you must want your breakfast. We had ours at seven o'clock, and it is half-past eleven, I am sure."

Whilst speaking she approached the fire with a toasting-fork, and commenced to toast some bread.

"Now, I'm going to make you some toast and tea. You have tasted nothing yet this morning."

Mrs. Fogarty looked admiringly at the young girl, as she stooped low before the fire.

"Bride, you grow handsomer every day. What a lot of beaux you'll have after you by-and-by."

"But you are very handsome yourself, Mrs. Fogarty," said the young girl, smiling. "There is not such another lovely red-and-white complexion in all Lusmore as yours."

"Ah! Bride, Bride, my good looks were never much use to me. I was married out of a boarding-school at fourteen to a man old enough to be my father. My mother was in such a hurry to get rid of me. Bride, don't marry too soon. Have your fun out first. Girls don't

know how well off they are when they are single."

"What happened when you came home to Baltore first?" asked the young girl sympathetically.

"Well, my dear, my husband's mother and his unmarried sister lived here, and they were such clever housekeepers, and I was a mere child, and they laughed and made fun of me instead of teaching me to look after the house. Ah! If I had been sent to Italy to study painting, who knows? I might have become a famous artist. Bride," she added, looking with a sudden sharpness at the young girl, "they say that that giggling chit at the Castle has wheedled your sweetheart away from you."

Bride grew very red as she rose from the fireplace and went to the dresser for a small plate on which to put the toast.

"Emily Neville," said she loyally, "is my very dearest friend, and you may be sure that I won't break my heart about any man who can be easily wheedled."

Crossing the yard, the young girl tapped at the dairy door to ask for some butter. A stout, florid-faced woman bounced out of the dairy, and,

first locking the door and putting the key in her pocket, said :

"Sure an' not another bit av butther ye git this week for the house. I've giv out the allowance of five pounds, an' ye may go buy it iv ye want any more. The masther expects me to sind in so many pounds to the fair av Knockbeg, an' av all the houses for waste and ruinashin' this bates 'em all."

"Give me the key at once," said the young girl, "I want butter for Mrs. Fogarty's breakfast, and besides I'm going to make pastry."

"Not a bit, not a bit," screamed the woman defiantly. "The missus 'll have to do without it, I only take me orders from me masther."

The labouring boys and men employed in the yard stood round grinning and gaping open-mouthed. Mrs. Fogarty, attracted by the voices, came to the back door.

"Bride," said she, "don't mind. I'll eat my toast dry."

"That you shan't," said the young girl. "While I am in Baltore I will show to your servants that you, and you alone, are mistress in your own house."

Then, hastily entering the kitchen, Bride took

down a small hammer from a shelf, and going out in the yard, before the dairywoman knew what she was about, the young girl had wrenched the padlock off the door of the dairy.

As she came back, laden with her spoils, Mrs. Fogarty whispered :

“ My husband gives the old hag a commission of a halfpenny on every pound of butter she sends to the market. That is why she is so stingy.”

“ The idea,” said Bride indignantly, “ of your either buying or borrowing butter while there was plenty of it in your own dairy.”

“ Ah, my dear ! ” said Mrs. Fogarty, with a sentimental sigh, “ I was born to be an artist, and cruel fate, or rather a cruel mother, made me a farmer’s wife—the one thing I was least fitted for.”

“ Never mind,” said Bride, laughing. “ I for one am very glad that you were not an artist, for then you would never have come to Lusmore, and what should we have done without you or your pleasant parties ? Now, take your breakfast comfortably, and don’t worry. I’m going upstairs to see if the dancing-room is properly arranged, and then I will lay out the supper in the parlour, and see that everything is right.”

Mrs. Fogarty looked after Bride, and sighed.

"Dear me, what fools men are," she said to herself. "How could the Rector's nephew turn away from a girl like that for such a dollified thing as Emily Neville?"

It was past ten o'clock at night, and Mrs. Fogarty's guests were enjoying themselves to the top of their bent. A very merry party were gathered upstairs in the large room set apart for dancing. This room was tastefully decorated with evergreens, and brilliantly lit by means of enormous sconces containing wax candles, which were fastened at short intervals around the walls.

At one end a temporary platform had been erected for the musicians. Sall-o'-the-Wig, dressed in a new pink pinafore, her face and arms glistening from a too prodigal use of yellow soap, and her mop of hair wilder than ever, presided over this department. Her instrument was a fiddle, and she was assisted by an old piper and a sickly man who tooted on a flute.

"Now," screamed Sall, as she flourished her bow over her head, "strike up, 'Off she goes.' Put more spirit in it, will ye?" she yelled at the consumptive-looking flute-player. "Wan would

think ye wor playin' the last speech an' dyin' lamentation av a green goslin in a thundersthorm. Wake up, man alive !”

Several couples got up at once, incited by the lively strains of “Off she goes ;” but Sall maliciously quickened and quickened the time of the jig, until, by degrees, most of the dancers, exhausted, dropped out of the contest, and finally the floor was left entirely to Mrs. Fogarty and her partner, Peter O’Brady, whose skill and endurance had outlasted the other competitors.

“Bravo ! Mr. Pether O’Brady, me darlint,” shouted Sall, in a great state of excitement. “More power to ye, Mrs. Fogarty, bud shure id’s yerself has more stay in ye than all the young wans haped together.”

The editor of *The Avenger* was attired in his usual green cut-away coat, and wore a white waistcoat and a large flower in honour of the festive occasion.

He seemed inspired by Sall’s music, for he double-shuffled with a marvellous rapidity; and invented such startling and original steps, that he drew down the repeated plaudits of the lookers-on.

Mrs. Fogarty gracefully ducked and swam

round O'Brady, her ample skirts of rich silver-gray brocaded tabinet rustling with her every movement.

With head thrown back, chin in air, eye-glass in eye, and his left hand jauntily akimbo on his hip, the editor toed lightly down the middle, but when he had all but reached the lady, she, with a swift movement, glided round out of his reach.

Major Silverthorne, who was standing by, the admired of all beholders, in a picturesque costume, half oriental, half European, clapped his hands vigorously.

"By Jove!" he cried to Ned Delaney, "Mrs. Fogarty is a stunner. Did you see how she executed that movement round O'Brady? I lay ten to one that she beats him."

"O'Brady has not warmed up to it properly yet," said Delaney. "What a spring he has got in him."

"Now," cried Sall-o'-the-Wig, her shrill voice being heard quite plainly over the general din, "strike up the 'Little House under the Hill.' *Inagh!* do ye call that playin'?" she screamed, scowling at the old piper. "Have ye any life in ye at all, at all, ye ould nagur?"

Here Sall, with a quick flourish of her bow,



dashed into a new jig, with such spirit and "go" that the floor was crowded soon with fresh dancers, eager to distinguish themselves. Major Silverthorne, winking at Ned Delaney, suddenly came behind Mrs. Fogarty, and, putting his arm round her, whirled her into a seat, and O'Brady was left figuring without a partner in the middle of the floor.

"Oh! Major," panted Mrs. Fogarty, out of breath, "why did you do that? I didn't want to give in."

"Mrs. Fogarty," said he gallantly, "you have retired with all the honours of war, and, were it not for my little *ruse*, you would have been forced to retreat ignominiously before long. That O'Brady is the deuce; he never gets tired."

"Dear me, Major," she said, with an innocent air, her capacious bosom heaving from the unwonted exertion, "how did you guess? I'd have fainted if I had tried to keep up any longer."

"Take some negus, will you, ma'am?" said Pat Mahon, approaching with a tray laden with glasses. "It will refresh you," he continued, smirking.

"Have you been dancing, Mr. Mahon?" asked Mrs. Fogarty, as she sipped the negus.

"Not much, as yet," he replied. "I am

just going to ask Miss Killeen to take a turn with me."

"Dem me, how like a waiter that school-master looks," whispered the Major to Ned Delaney. "I feel half inclined to tip him a copper. That fine girl dance with him! Not she, while I am here. Ah! Delaney, if I were only twenty years younger. He, he! I was a sad dog in my day—a sad dog!"

The Major swaggered over to a corner of the room where Bride Killeen was playfully urging some shy young men to ask some deserted girls to dance.

"Miss Killeen," said the doughty Major, putting one hand over the region of his heart, "will you walk through this dance with me?"

"Why, Major," said Bride, smiling, "I was certain you were downstairs, playing whist with Father Rody Toole and Mr. Fogarty."

"My dear girl," cried the Major, aghast, "you don't class me with those old fogies. What! abandon the society of your fair and charming sex for cards? Never!"

"Bravo!" cried O'Brady, clapping him on the back. "Now, Bride, let us see you try that hornpipe with the Major."

The young lady laughed gaily, and the Major

gazed down in dismay at his own variegated silk knickerbockers.

"Hem—hem," said he dubiously, "a hornpipe. If Miss Bride will excuse me, I would prefer a quadrille."

The young girl shook her head.

"Miss Killeen, will you favour me?" asked the schoolmaster, with an insinuating smile, as he stuck out his thin back and crooked his arm in the latest style of polite deportment, as taught by the village dancing-master.

Gerald Moore, who had been looking gloomily on, now interfered before Bride could answer.

"Mahon," said he, "Miss Killeen does not care to dance hornpipes."

"The lady can answer for herself," said Mahon, with a sneer, as he still offered his arm to the girl.

"I am not going to dance at all," said Bride, in a constrained tone, and, turning away from both the young men, she walked over to Mrs. Fogarty.

"Bride, I hope you are enjoying yourself," said the mistress of Baltore, fanning herself vigorously.

"Oh, yes, very much, indeed," was the reply.

"I saw you talking just now to the Rector's

nephew. He is the finest young man in the room. Why didn't you dance with him, my dear?"

Bride blushed brightly, and Pat Mahon, who had followed the young girl, said to Mrs. Fogarty:

"Why, ma'am, Moore can't dance a step. He even pretends to despise the art, and maintains that it is so ridiculous to see sensible people bobbing in and out and up and down like so many Jack-in-the-boxes."

"Well," said Mrs. Fogarty, laughing, "I am very glad the rest of the young folk are not of his opinion. It would be so very dull for us."

"Miss Killeen," said the schoolmaster, "if you don't like hornpipes, can't I prevail on you to dance a waltz? Which do you prefer—the *trois-temps* or the *deux-temps*?"

"I do not intend dancing," she answered impatiently.

"If Moore asked you, you would, maybe," he said rudely, as his small eyes glared malignantly at the young girl. Bride made no answer, but her lips compressed tightly.

"Mrs. Fogarty! Mrs. Fogarty!" cried Major Silverthorne, in an eager tone, "I come with an humble petition. May we have the kitchen-

door taken off its hinges for Sally to dance on ? ”

“ But, Major,” entreated Mrs. Fogarty ruefully, “ if you take away the door, all the animals in the back-yard will get into the house.”

“ I’ll arrange that, never fear,” said he, hurrying off before she could refuse. “ Now, boys, lend a hand.”

Presently some of the men returned, bearing a door. Laying it down in the middle of the floor, a servant scattered half-a-dozen eggs on it. Peter O’Brady then approached the musician’s platform, and, gracefully handing off Sall-o’-the-Wig, led her to the centre of the room.

“ Sarah, my princess,” said he, “ your turn next.”

Sall looked round and grinned, and shook her mop of hair. Then, with a wild war-whoop, she bounded on to the kitchen-door; and, first flourishing her bow defiantly over her head, she commenced to play the “ Rakes of Mallow.” With a marvellous cleverness she sprang backwards and forwards on the door in a mad kind of dance. She neither missed a note nor lost time, as with a dazzling dexterity she doubled and trebled with her heavy shoes without even

breaking one of the half-dozen eggs scattered beneath her to try her skill in evading them.

“Bravo! bravo! more power, Sall!” was shouted from every side as they gathered round her in a circle.

Excited by the plaudits, Sall bounded higher and higher, her hair flying about her, her face covered with beads of perspiration. Suddenly the sound of voices as if in quarrel came from outside. In a few minutes the room was almost completely deserted. Sall's admirers rushed out pell-mell to the landing, eager for a new sensation. They reached it in time to see Gerald Moore catch Pat Mahon by the back of the neck, and with one heave of his muscular arm the young man swung the schoolmaster over the balusters until he hung quivering over the staircase. Several of the women screamed and fainted at the sight.

“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” screamed Mrs. Fogarty, wringing her hands, “don't murder the man in my house, whatever you do. Take him somewhere else. Don't kill him, you will spoil my best stair-carpet, only new on last week.”

“What is it all about?” asked Peter O'Brady.

The Major, who had been smoking on the staircase, answered :

“Why, that hanged sneak, Mahon, said something insulting about Miss Killeen, and Moore sprang on him like a tiger. By Jove ! O’Brady, what a magnificent soldier the fellow would make. Look at the depth of his shoulders. He ought to be in the Life Guards instead of lounging about country roads.”

Pat Mahon’s limbs quivered and drew up like those of a man hanging on the gallows, the veins on his forehead stood out like cords, his eyes were shut, and he seemed half insensible from terror.

Gerald Moore heaved the schoolmaster backwards over the balusters again and planted him once more on his feet, keeping tight hold of him by the back of the neck all the while. When Mahon felt the firm ground beneath him, he kicked and struggled and bit at Moore in his vain efforts to free himself. The countenance of the Rector’s nephew was impassible in its calmness, but his dark eyes looked dangerously menacing.

“Drop the hound ! drop him to the bottom !” shouted the wilder and younger spirits.

“Do be calm, Moore,” entreated the older and calmer men.

“Oh ! dear me,” cried Mrs. Fogarty, “will

none of you stop murder ! Mr. O'Brady, please do something. Oh ! dear, dear, what shall I do at all—at all. Oh ! Major, Major, I'll die, I'll die !”

“Drop the hound ! drop him !” again shouted the younger men.

Bride Killeen, like one in a dream, stood staring down the well of the staircase, her hands nervously clutching at the railings, her face as colourless as her white cashmere robe. The men gathered closer and closer around, some urging one thing, some another, but Gerald never heeded any of them.

“Oh !” screamed Mrs. Fogarty, “will no one do anything at all ? Do—do call my husband.”

“It would be hardly safe for anyone to interfere,” said Peter O'Brady, as, eyeglass in eye, he quietly watched the scene before him.

The whist party below, disturbed by the noise, came to the foot of the staircase, and Father Rody Toole called out :

“What do you mean by making such a row up there ? Come, stop at once.”

“Ha, ha—Father Rody !” cried the Major, “we are only reviving one of the good old customs.”



“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” said Mrs. Fogarty, “what am I to do?”

Gerald's silence and apparent inaction while this hubbub was going on around him was far from betokening that his wrath was cooling.

Suddenly he shook the schoolmaster, and then, as if the being he held in his grip were no more than a rat, he swung him again over the balusters, and lifted him higher up as if to dash him down with greater force to the flagged hall beneath.

“Oh! oh!” shrieked Mrs. Fogarty, as she fell back into O'Brady's arms.

At this critical moment, Ned Delaney, who had been smoking out-doors, rushed in, and rushing quickly up the staircase, elbowed his way right and left through the crowd in a state of great agitation.

“Make way—make way for Heaven's sake!” he gasped.

At the sound of someone approaching behind him, Gerald Moore looked round with a frenzied glare in his eyes, as if to see who would dare to interpose between him and Mahon.

Ned Delaney was too intent on his own purpose to be daunted by the young man's fierce

expression, and now he uttered a few words in a low emphatic tone. To the amazement of the spectators, those whispered words had a sudden and almost magical effect on the Rector's nephew. Lifting the schoolmaster over the balusters and laying him quietly on his feet on the landing, Gerald, without looking either to the right or to the left, walked deliberately down the staircase and straight out of the house.

He was followed almost immediately by Ned Delaney. Everybody stared in surprise at everybody else at this unexpected ending to what had promised to be a tragedy.

Shaking himself together, the schoolmaster half-choking gasped: "I'll have my revenge on the villain. I'll be even with him one day."

"Come, Mahon," cried the Major, "stop your muttering. The toe of my boot feels inclined to execute a war dance on your body. Be off with you!"

The younger men, disappointed at Mahon's escape, gathered round him menacingly, as if they were not going to let him off so easily.

"Oh! Mr. Mahon, please go home," said Mrs. Fogarty. "I would never sleep a wink

again if murder were committed on the staircase."

The schoolmaster, scowling, walked away.

As he passed Bride Killeen she heard him hiss the words :

"To-morrow—midnight—Kylenamanna. I know their little games. I'll be even with the villain."

The young girl shuddered as she saw the malignant expression on Mahon's countenance.

Sall-o'-the-Wig, who had been leaning against the doorway, now waved her bow over her head, and, with a flourish, struck up a lively tune.

Mrs. Fogarty, half by coaxing, half by pushing, managed to get her guests back into the room, and 'mid the mazes of the dance most of them had soon forgotten the scene which had occurred on the landing.

"Bride," whispered Mrs. Fogarty, with a complacent sigh, "beauty has its drawbacks. If you weren't handsome those men wouldn't have made such a fuss about you. What fun it was !"

"It was no fun to me," said Bride. "I assure you, I was very much terrified."

"Come, Mrs. Fogarty," said Peter O'Brady, "let me lead you down to supper."

Bride Killeen was the last to quit the room, and, as she went down the staircase alone, the young girl was haunted by the schoolmaster's mysterious words :

“To-morrow—midnight—Kyleneamanna.”

END OF VOL. I.











